

EX - LIBRIS



BOUNTIANNA

G.C.I.

DR. GEORGE
MACKANESS

AUSTRALIANA



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE PEARL
AND
THE OCTOPUS

TO ALFRED DEAKIN.

THE PEARL AND THE OCTOPUS

AND OTHER
EXERCISES IN
PROSE & VERSE

BY

A. G. STEPHENS



GEORGE ROBERTSON & CO.,
PTY. LTD.

Melbourne - Sydney - Adelaide
and Brisbane.

For the original publication of one or more of these interludes in a journalist's work, I have pleasure in making acknowledgment to *The Bulletin*, N.S.W. ; *The Sun*, N.S.W. ; *The Theatre*, N.S.W. ; *The North Queensland Register* ; *The Register*, S.A. ; *The Daily Herald*, S.A. ; *The Sunday Times*, W.A. ; *The Sun*, W.A. ; *The Golden West* ; *The Evening Post*, N.Z. ; *The Auckland Star*, N.Z. ; *The Press* and *The Weekly Press*, N.Z. Several items have been recaptured from books now out of print. For a hint of " Bayley's Reward " there is a debt to F. W. Ophel, Kalgoorlie ; in " The Last Camp " there is a memory of a French sonnet to which the precise reference has escaped me.

A.G.S.

PR
6037
S828p

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
" A BUSH STORY "	123
A FAREWELL	34
A TIGHT PLACE	62
ALICE, AND I, AND MEMORY	33
ANTÆAN	161
AVE, AUSTRALIA !	25
BABYLON	9
BALLADES :	
Of the Birth-Rate	55
Of Purple Pimples	56
Of Queries	57
Of the Seat of Love	58
BAYLEY'S REWARD	28
CITO PEDE	137
HARD LINES	131
JARRAHLAND JINGLES	136
MOLLIE MCGINNIS MCGUIRE	132
NURSE JANE'S DISEASES	88
OWED TO WOOLLOOMOOLOO, N.S.W.	77
PAID TO DOODLEKINE, W.A.	79
PARKES	35
PHARAOH AUSTRALIS !	75
POOR MARY ANN	80
RENAISSANCE	27
RONDEAUS :	
For Claribel in Distress	47
For Phyllida, Putting on Her Hat	48
For Maud, after She Came into the Garden	49
For One of the Three Preceding	50

	PAGE
SALVATION EMIGRATION	86
SONNETS :	
For " A London Commercial "	52
For Alice in Autumn	53
For John Farrell	54
On the Burning of G. Darrell's MS. Plays ..	51
SPASMS	92
SYDNEY IN THE SPRING	38
THE ADVENTURE	73
THE CROWN OF GUM LEAVES	95
THE DYING POET	82
THE GAME	134
THE HONEYMOON TRAIN	121
THE LADIES' GALLERY	127
THE LAST CAMP	40
THE PEARL AND THE OCTOPUS	11
THE POETELEPATH	141
THREE CLIFFS	139
THREE LADIES AND A LOOKING-GLASS	41
TO THE EDITOR	131
VERSIONS :	
From Catulle Mendès	60
From Olivedo Guerrini	59

BABYLON.

To A. H. B.

Babylon has fallen ! Ay ; but Babylon endures
Wherever human wisdom shines or human folly lures ;
Where lovers lingering walk beside, and happy children
play,

Is Babylon ! Babylon ! for ever and for aye.

The plan is rudely fashioned, the dream is unfulfilled,
Yet all is in the archetype if but a builder willed ;
And Babylon is calling us, the microcosm of men,
To range her walls in harmony and lift her spires again ;
The sternest walls, the proudest spires, that ever sun
shone on,

Halting a space his burning race to gaze on Babylon.

Babylon has fallen ! Ay ; but Babylon shall stand :
The mantle of her majesty is over sea and land.
Hers is the name of challenge flung, a watchword in the
fight

To grapple grim eternities and gain the old delight ;
And in the word the dream is hid, and in the dream the
deed,

And in the deed the mastery for those who dare to
lead.

Surely her day shall come again, surely her breed be born
To urge the hope of humankind and scale the peaks of
morn—

To fight as they who fought till death their bloody field
upon,
And kept the gate against the Fate frowning on Babylon.

Babylon is fallen ! Nay ; for Babylon falls never ;
Her seat is in the aspiring brain, in nerves that leap and
quiver :

Upon her towers of ancient dream Prometheus is
throned,

And still his ravished spark is flung wherever manhood's
owned.

All vices, crimes, and mutinies were Babylon's ; and
then

All honours, prides, and ecstasies—for in her streets were
Men ;

And Man by Man must grow apace, and Man by Man
must thrive,

And Man from Man must snatch the torch that lights
the race alive :

Yea, here and now her citizens, as in the years far gone
Stone by stone, and laugh with groan, upbuild Babylon!

THE PEARL AND THE OCTOPUS.

Most of the people who bring copy to an editor really wish to sell it. Bedbury was different. He did not care whether he sold or received an expression of undeceptive regret. He was aware that he would be more comfortable in better boots. Still, boots are merely boots, and if they do not pinch you to-day there is always to-morrow. When you have learned the science of life you know that it is only the immaterial things that are material. What is called matter is just a vessel for the disastrous ecstasies of the spirit. Every bottle of gin is a symbol of the universe.

I did not notice Bedbury's boots ; but he explained afterwards that the soles were held on by carpenter's tacks, and made a flapping and distressful noise when he walked. This noise intruded upon his dreams, and he desired to eliminate it. With that object he had borrowed from the proprietor of a boot-shop, upon assurance of a future purchase, one penny to buy a child's exercise-book, and had spent the morning in a public-house, where he had accumulated titles to respect and the use of pen and ink, writing "Thoughts on Nothing in Particular." He desired me to give him fifteen shillings for the "Thoughts." Otherwise he would flap away to Port-Wine Lizzie, who could be relied on for a meal and cigarettes. Everybody on the Rocks

knew in what an illimitable ocean of womanly sympathy swam the strange soiled soul of Port-Wine Lizzie.

I bought Bedbury's copy; and our acquaintance began formally. It continued with unusual informality, whenever Bedbury chose. He confided to me that I was a great joke, and he liked to sit in the office and watch my jocular proceedings. I was a high-powered co-efficient of the everything in the world that amused him. Sometimes he brought other children's exercise-books partially filled with "Thoughts on Nothing in Particular." When I did not buy the "Thoughts," Bedbury preferred to borrow the missing purchase money.

Presently I learned Bedbury's history. He was a good-natured scamp, with a moneyed wife in England—"a dear little chuck of a woman as round as a roleypoley." He looked like any other middle-sized man of thirty, yet made a feature of clear blue eyes that twinkled perpetually at life's comedy. He possessed a talent for writing, a talent for drinking, and a genius for roaming and loafing. Occasionally he had cultivated his talents: his genius had cultivated him.

"The little woman was miserable when I was with her," Bedbury remarked; "but she's more miserable when I'm away. I've been all round Australia now, and one of these days I think I'll go home and make her happy. She pants for her prodigal. Twenty-five pounds a quarter isn't enough, and she won't allow me more for fear I'll be too comfortable away from her."

It appeared that the £25 lasted Bedbury for a week of carmine days and purple nights. During the rest of the quarter he supported himself as public-house pianist,

or as vendor of complexion powders, or as letter-writer for the populace, or in other facile ways to which his genius moved him. I never knew whether to expect him frowsy or in fine linen. He lived with an equal mind in the Hotel Australia or under a rock in the Lower Domain.

I suppose that Bedbury came a dozen times altogether in six or eight months. Sometimes we trafficked in "Nothing in Particular." Sometimes I assisted him by printing the wrappers of the complexion powders, made simply by pounding up starch, which, with the addition of a mendacious label, appeared to be readily saleable to the ladies of Woolloomooloo at 1s. per oz. packet. Sometimes Bedbury just called sociably in order that I might amuse him. The spectacle of other people at work exhilarated Bedbury.

Then, one afternoon, Bedbury came about five o'clock. He was bathed and barbered, and wore new clothes. Money rattled in his pocket.

"Come and have some stout and oysters," said Bedbury, "and I'll square up what I owe you. I'm going home to the wife to-morrow. Poor little thing! she'll go wild with delight. I'm afraid I don't deserve her; and I'm sure she doesn't deserve me. This is the third remittance she's made, and she had sense enough not to send the cash this time. I got an order for a second-class passage by the Orient line. However, I had no trouble in exchanging it for third-class—bless her little heart!—and I've had a last, lovely, lingering spree on the difference. But I think I'll really go to-morrow. Come and share the Last Supper!"

I told Bedbury that if he would wait till the job in

hand was finished I would cheerfully be his guest ; and an hour later we were seated in a convenient oyster saloon. Bedbury was host.

" I pay to-night," he said ; " and I value the privilege. Two large plates and a large bottle of stout, noble Diego ! Let's see, how much do I owe you ? " And Bedbury pulled a handful of half-crowns out of his pocket.

" Only a few shillings," I said ; " and you'll want your change on the voyage."

" How much ? " he persisted. " I should say about thirty-five shillings. Will that do ? "

" Oh yes," I said, " if you insist on paying."

Bedbury put half-a-crown on the edge of a plate of oysters and pushed it towards me. I pocketed the half-crown. Bedbury pocketed the others. Then, as host, he set himself to entertain me with stories of his career in Australia. Certainly he had seen a polychromatic lot of people. We finished the stout and oysters.

" Once more, Don Diego ! " said Bedbury ; and upon the rim of the second plate appeared a second half-crown, which I pocketed.

" Oysters remind me that I regret nothing but my pearl," said Bedbury meditatively. " Australia is a gloriously barbaric country, and I am a barbarian. But that tender spot in my heart undoes me. I go now to put on my ill-fitting robe of civilization, to saunter down Fleet-street, to dine at the Gambrinus, to see the girls at the Empire, and to come home and cuddle the little chuck. I bring her nothing but this unworthy

carcase. It contents her, yet I wish I could have give her my pearl. I conjecture that its value in the mean market-place would be £2000."

Bedbury was embarked upon the flood of reminiscence. I interrupted only to eat oysters and drink stout.

"Have you ever been at Broome?" said Bedbury.

"No," I said. "Have you?"

"Three weeks after I reached Australia I was in Broome," said Bedbury. "O you Australians! so ignorant of the striped and spotted romance of your country. You beetle-witted Bœotians! creatures of sordid shops and sinister offices and sly little suburban rabbit-hutches, busily occupied in the degradation of your sad small souls, and deaf to the kingly call of high adventure. Sydney and Melbourne, quotha! Streets and houses! trams and policemen! mean parodies of Europe! And life fierce and palpitating, death black and sudden, with flushed Fortune tossing the dice recklessly for one or the other in a paradise of coral calms and a hell of shrieking hurricanes, are waiting, beckoning, thrilling on the beach at Broome. Two more plates, valiant Diego! Another bottle, my parody of Portugal!"

A third half-crown came to me on the rim of the plate.

"I was the bad egg," said Bedbury, "and Australia was to new-lay me. The little woman's aunts told her that it really could not go on. She wept, and transmitted a draft for £500 to the Union Bank in Perth. 'Good-bye for ever!' And before the ship was out of the Channel she knew that her aunts were her worst enemies, and that I never really loved the other girl. 'Come back, and all will be forgiven!' The cable reached

me at Gibraltar ; but I thought that a little longer absence would improve the quality of the forgiveness, and the new horizon sang enchantment. So at Perth I collected the draft and met a man. He talked ; I listened ; and the lugger was mine, with Jackson to lead the fishing on a share of the catch."

" Well, we fished. It was the beginning of the season, and we hired gear and crew, set sail, dived and hauled for two blessed months. Every day was wonderful till the liquor was done. Blue skies, lapping waves, and the stink of the shell made up Elysium—especially the stink of the shell. It gave the contrast that is essential to consciousness. Nobody ever had a Heaven without a Hell for the other fellow to make it heavenly. And Jackson and the gang did all the work. I smoked, and dreamed of the pure and perfect pearl that never popped out.

" One morning we were on a shoal south of Broome, and I was dozing in the chair: I hate getting up early! The crew were opening the catch, and making the usual filthy mess of it. Suddenly I came wide awake with the feeling that something had happened. What ? I looked along the deck. Jackson was cursing the luck. The Jap. was smoking before going down. The four Malays, and Tom, the Manilaman, were digging into the shell, sorting it into baskets, and occasionally adding to the little pile of seed in the tin mug. Everything was as usual. Yet I felt something had happened. Some stimulus to the subconscious mind had braced me to wakefulness. I gave it up. You know the feeling you have when you're trying to catch a dream that's just slid over the edge of memory ? It was like that.

“Next morning I got it. I was in the act of waking, and all in a flash, while I was still listening to the noise that woke me, I saw my dream. It was gone in an instant, but that instant was enough. I was lying on deck; the shell was being opened; everything was as it had been on the day before—everything bar one. Manila Tom dug his knife into a shell, paused an instant, and I saw his left hand go up and wipe his mouth. Then I woke right up. That was the dream.

“I did not raise my head until I had got the thing well fixed in memory. You know that as soon as you lift your head your dream vanishes, because you disturb the circulation of blood in the brain. Then I sat up and thought the thing over. I had been asleep; but I had been warned to wake; and it seemed to me the warning meant something. Why did Tom put his hand up to his mouth?

“I puzzled over that for a week. I didn’t say anything to Jackson; there was nothing to say. I hadn’t seen anything; and dreams don’t count. I watched Tom; he was just as usual; everything was just as usual.

“At the end of a week we put into a fresh-water beach to stretch our legs and clean up. It was a funny kind of a beach, all big pot-holes in the rock, about three miles of pot-holes. Those near the sea were just salt-water channels where the tide ran; but farther back were holes where the fresh water had collected—a bit brackish, but good enough for us.

“We anchored a couple of hundred yards out, came ashore in the dingy, and settled down for the day. In the morning all hands were washing and cleaning up,

and we gave them the afternoon off. The Jap. and the boys settled down for a gamble, and Jackson and I walked round a bit and came back to watch the game. I watched Tom.

"He was the ordinary Manila boy, smart enough at his work, and Jackson told me he had been on the coast several seasons. I reckoned he had a bad eye, but that might have been imagination—just as if you were to imagine that because this is a bottle there ought to be stout in it. Ho, Diego! you varlet! one bottle and two plates!"

"Hold on!" I said. "My appetite isn't unlimited. Enough's as good as a feast. Besides, you can't afford it."

"'Tis false!" said Bedbury. "I can afford anything except to feel that I can't afford a thing. Shall I prune my manhood to the measure of the mart? 'Tis doubly false! Enough is never enough: it is the too-much that the Godhead in humanity aspires to gain. Give me a feast or a famine, but no damnable compromise with my divine desires!"

I subsided, and got a malicious grin and another half-crown on the edge of the plate.

"So I watched Tom," pursued Bedbury. "Presently Tom got up and moved along the beach. The other two went on playing, and Jackson went on watching them. I went on watching Tom. I wondered where Tom was going. I wondered what Tom was up to. I wondered at large.

"Tom dawdled along the beach. I dawdled up the sandhill at the back, down the other side, and laid a

course parallel with Tom's. Half-a-mile on I looked over the hill. Tom was still moving. A mile on I looked over again. Tom had come to anchor on the edge of a pothole, and seemed to be contemplating the bright sea waves. No, he wasn't ; his head was turned down ; he was looking at the pot-hole. No, he wasn't ; he was looking at something in his hand, turning his dirty brown paw this way and that, and gazing as intently as if he held——What did he hold ?

" I made a circumbendibus, and crept up behind the gazer, going softly on the sand. Tom was so intent that I got within three yards of him on the weather bow. His hand went in ; his hand went out ; he looked close and he looked at arm's length ; he gloated. I looked, too, and there in Tom's hand was My Pearl—the pearl I had dreamed of. A pearl ! a dazzling pink pearl ! a pink-pear-pearl as big as the top of your little finger, and apparently perfect. (I owe you two more plates.)

" I was bound to get a little closer, and Tom was bound to hear me. His hand went up to his mouth. The next moment I was on top of him ; the next moment he was on top of me ; the next moment we had rolled over the edge into the pot-hole.

" It wasn't deep, not very ; not at the side where we fell over. But I was holding on ; Tom was holding off ; and we plunged over head and ears into the deep end, where the sea-channel came in. Still I hung on. Why ? I don't know. It is not in my temperament to hang on. It is my genius to drop off. I suppose some primitive instinct came top when I saw that pearl."

" Down we went, locked together and struggling ; up we came, struggling and locked together. I wasn't

going to give Tom best then. I was willing to die to get that pearl. And I very nearly did.

“As we went down the second time something hit me on the thigh, curled round my leg, tore away a section of dungaree, braced itself, got hold, and held. Another something grappled for my arm. I knew what it was ; I knew by knowledge and I knew by instinct ; and I went mad with fear. Tom and the pearl went right out of my head. I was willing to die, but not that way. I let go Tom and got up to the surface, fighting for a bit of foothold.

“I had no knife—nothing. I wrenched my shoulder free, but the suckers on my leg held, held and pulled. I got over to the side of the hole, got footing in five feet of water, and fought for more, and missed, and fell head under, and fought up, and clawed, and kicked and smothered. But I didn’t yell. That seemed strange to me afterwards. I suppose I was too busy fighting for breath, fighting for life.

“Tom never made a sound either. The brute had him too. He was fighting just as desperately, but he was in deeper water, about a yard away, going up and down and choking, with his eyes jumping out of his head. The devil had three tentacles on Tom. I saw that without seeing it. I saw nothing at the time, but afterwards I knew I had seen, and I remembered—everything. Good God !

“Have you ever seen an octopus’s eyes ? Talk about the head of Medusa ! They’re big ; they look bigger in the water ; and the water in that hole was like blue crystal till we lashed it into foam. But they have expression—an expression that is no expression ; they

are eyes of living stone ; they mean nothing, yet in meaning nothing they mean everything ; they do not glare, they are cold, deadly cold, and fixed as if petrified ; they are like immutable Fate, like eternal Death, like the image of all the death that has ever come into the world. And as you look at them, and feel the horrible leathery grip of the suckers, you know that they mean your death, and you imagine rather than see the horrible parrot-mouth that you will go into, and you go wild with terror, or I did. Good God ! ”

Bedbury was sweating. He took out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead, recovering himself with a wry smile.

“ Didn’t know I was going to let you in for this, old man,” he said. “ It’s as real to me as if it had happened this morning. The brute was under a ledge of rock, but I could see it, and I knew I was done. So, by the way, is the stout. Diego ! Ho, Diego ! Bless my soul ! I was nearly forgetting my duty of hospitality. Let’s see, that’s five I’ve given you.”

And another half-crown was pushed towards me.

“ Well ? ” I queried.

“ Well, that’s all. At the critical moment the octopus let go me and planted my tentacles on Tom. I crawled out of the hole somehow, and fainted on the edge. I was vomiting—as sick as a dog. I lay there about an hour before Jackson came meandering along to see where I’d got to. And then came the funny thing. When I had picked up a bit we went after the octopus. It had gone—cleared right away. But down in the hole, under the ledge, lay the body of Manila Tom with a

big hole in the belly—all the poor wretch's inside was bitten out. What do you make of that ?

" I'll tell you what I make of it. That brute was after the pearl—it wanted full many a gem of purest ray serene to deck its dark unfathomed cave of ocean. When it found Tom had swallowed the pearl, it transferred all its attention and all its suckers to Tom. When it had got the pearl into its own stomach, it made off for fear of reprisals. How did the octopus find out about the pearl ? Don't ask me. There are the facts : can you give a better explanation of them ? You can't suppose that an octopus deliberately preferred to make a meal off a brown man rather than off a white man—rather off Tom than off Me. Besides, there was the way Tom's body was mangled. How do you account for that ?

" Anyway, it took me a month to get over the affair—I used to dream about those eyes. Now I dream about the pearl—my little woman's pink pearl—where is it ? Is it set in the crown of the Octopus King ? or does it shine in one of the Octopus Queen's bracelets ? or was my octopus just a collector with a little cache of pearls that he polishes privately with his softest sucker, meaning to present them to his youngest daughter on her wedding-day ?

" Not knowing, can't say. But I can say, ' Stout and oysters, Diego ! ' "

" No more for me," I said.

" But you must," said Bedbury. " I owe you twenty-two-and-six yet—that's nine plates, and two more for puns—total eleven plates, which I shall be proud and happy to hand you."

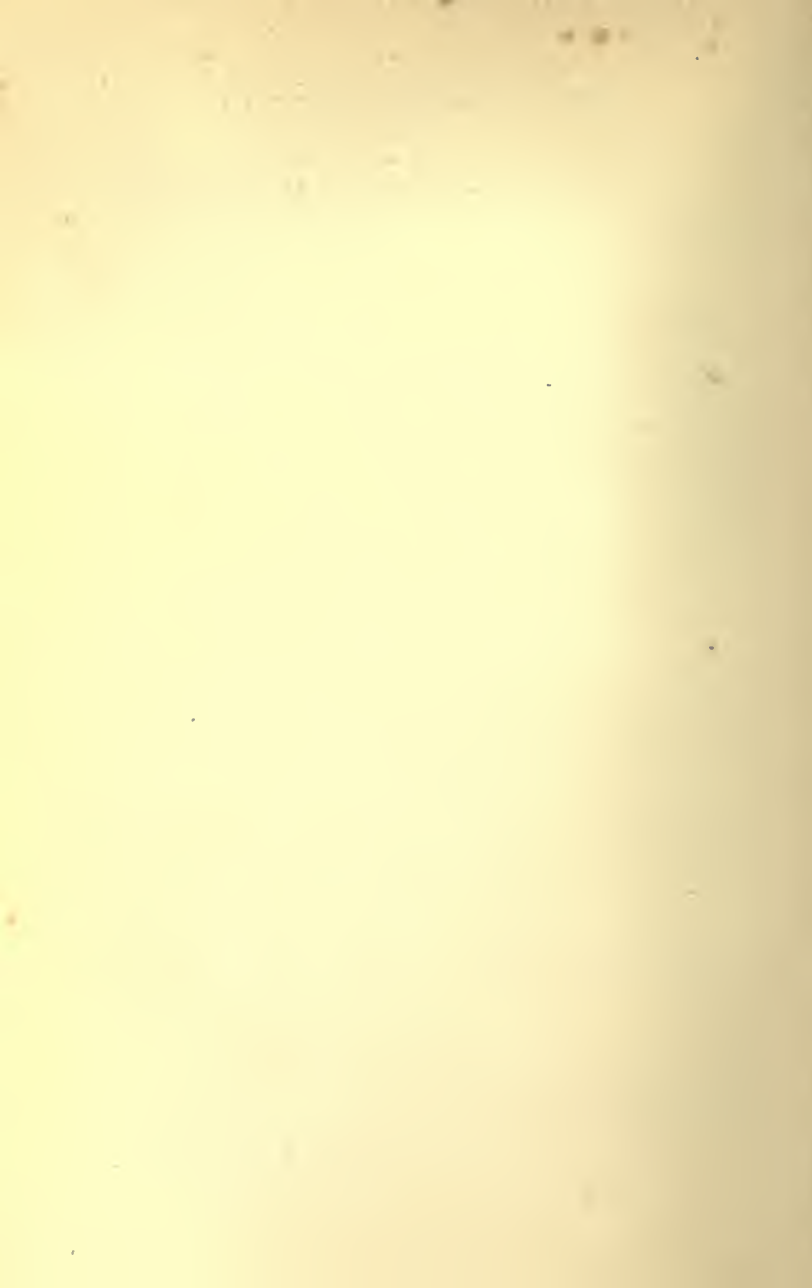
"The session is adjourned," said I, rising.

"No more oysters, no more half-crowns," said Bedbury.

"Keep them," I said.

"I will," said Bedbury.

And Bedbury did. We parted outside the oyster saloon, without handshaking. Bedbury walked off jingling money in several pockets, with a sideways grin over his shoulder at me. He walked off into the night, and I presume that he boarded his boat next day and returned to England, wife, and his own private notion of duty. I never heard of him again.



AVE, AUSTRALIA !

There's a word in the south, where the Winter speeds
forward,

That kindles young hearts into jubilant flame ;

There's a word where the Summer is fleeing to nor'ward

That lights up young eyes with the pride of the Name ;

There's signal and token, there's welcome bespoken,

There's a Star at whose shining the darkness grows
pale,

The barriers are broken, the sleepers have woken—

She comes, a fair Nation ! Australia, hail !

The Bush-winds breathe freedom above and around her,

From anger and quarrel she brings us release ;

With blessing and healing she's girt her and bound her—

Cinctured with Harmony ; sandalled with Peace.

And yet they could slander her ! yet they could fear her !

Before that calm beauty could tremble and quail !

Ah, heed not ! delay not ! draw nearer, draw nearer,

Our Lady of Promise ! Australia, hail !

Give us a scutcheon as wide as our Continent !

Give us a Flag that will shelter us all,

Fold us and shroud us, if ever on blood-besprent

Battle-field fighting, we falter and fall.

For ill communion, give brotherly union ;

For catchwords, a watchword ; for marsh-fires, a Grail ;

Whatever is to be, let us front destiny

Shoulder to shoulder ! Australia, hail !

There are thrills, there are tremors that set the blood
tingling ;

There's lighting of beacons through all the broad East ;
There's scent of blown orchids with wattle-bloom
mingling—

Strew fern for her footstep ! pour wine for her feast !
For She's coming—and singing ! you hear her ? you
hear her ?

They shrink from her pathway, the prophets of bale.
She's for us ! she's with us ! O cheer her ! O cheer her !
Our Mother and Lover ! Australia, hail !

RENAISSANCE.

In my ears it is sounding to-day,
The song of the Spring !
How my heart leaps, and urges the blood in swift surges
to greet the sweet Spring !
And my pulse, from low undertones rising to thunder-
tones, trumpets the challenge of mystical May,
Of witching September, while Winter's dull ember
Glowes fierce in the glamour of Spring,
The passion-fed furnace of Spring !

And my Love, she is tingling to-day
To the touch of the Spring !
How she trembles and thrills as from numberless rills
pours the full tide of Spring !
And her eyes are veiled oceans whence amorous potions
I quaff in a fury, as one who is fey :
She bears me no malice, but holds up for chalice
Her lips brimning over with Spring,
All ruddied and coralled with Spring.

O my Youth ! Let us make holiday,
Give a garland to Spring !
For you flower from her root and your ecstasies shoot
from the sources of Spring !
Not a throb gay or tragic her alchemy magic has missed
from the cycles of worlds passed away :
Kiss of atoms thick-thronging, sighs of spheres mad
with longing,
A Deity burning, a Universe yearning—
All summed up in Spring !

BAYLEY'S REWARD.

To M.J.C.

Avenel's in Victoria, where the winds of Summer die,
And the slender, sleepy gum-trees lean up to a breathless
sky ;

At Avenel in Victoria there's a plot four-square and
barred,

With a mound, and a grim white headstone—and this is
Bayley's Reward.

Good gamester he ! for he played with Death and staked
his life on the chance ;

The table was Death's, and the dice were Death's, and
the game was Death's in advance ;

Far and away in the wilderness he struggled and fought
—and won,

To go out on flukes when the lights blazed up, with the
new life just begun.

Many a man Australia has, many a man as brave,
Many a man who firmly trod the path to the Western
grave,

Many a man with heart as high to follow a leader's call—
He with the first was a pioneer : he blazed the track for
all.

The hot noons, the slow noons, he sought and struggled
and strove ;

The long nights, the wan nights, when the chill stars
mocked above ;

The drink that leaves still thirsting, the hard and
hoarded fare—
These he knew, and worse he knew ; but he never
knew despair.

He was the first to snatch from the West her glorious
golden prize ;
He followed his Luck with a manly heart, and wooed in a
manly guise ;
He grasped his Luck by the girdle close, and looked in her
shining eyes,
And he won his Luck, and lost his Luck—and low in the
dust he lies.

* * *

There is a valley, a valley of valleys, aswoon in the
sweetest South :
Never a night of storm comes there, and never a day of
drouth ;
The hills that hem it are high, so high, and the bland,
scarce-breathing air
Brings pain surcease from the breast of peace—but
Australia is not there.

There is a river, a river of rivers, that brides with the
velvet East,
And the mouth is a ripple of whitest sands, where blue
waves cream and yeast ;
The banks are tossing with fern and bloom, and the
drooping trees are fair,
And it beads like wine when the sun's ashine—but
Australia is not there.

There is a mountain, a mountain of mountains, that
towers in the radiant North,
And 'twixt its peaks by the lightning scarred the clouds
come eddying forth ;
Its shoulders are stately with cedars, but its noble brow
is bare :
It stands like a god in a land untrod—but Australia is
not there.

She sits in the West—Australia !—brooding in proud
disdain,
And her gaze goes out to the burning sky, far over the
burning plain :
Never her word the silence breaks, never she laughs or
sighs,
And her mouth is set in the fiercest smile ; but a man
would die for her eyes.

She sits in the West, in the desert West, till her web of
fate be spun ;
Her feet are swathed in the sand-wreaths, her head flung
free to the sun ;
Ever she beckons and threatens, threatens and beckons
the bold,
And of whitened bone she has built her throne, above a
reef of gold.

Some die in the East in a quiet bed, with friends and
children round ;
The bells are rung, and the chant is sung, and the grave
is hallowed ground ;
And some by the dried-up rock-holes die, in the agony of
the West,
And the wind moans their requiem—but Australia
loves them best.

To think that a man can dare so much ! to think what
men endure !
Wherever the light of her eyes is shed they follow and
follow her lure ;
The plough stands still, the shears are dropped, the good
horse left alone,
And love and wife count cheap as life, when Australia
calls her own.

They follow and follow on every track, and over the
trackless waste ;
One falls here, and another there, yet the followers no
less haste ;
Where the salt-pans gleam with bleaching bones, where
the samphire turns blood-red
They fall, and never to yearning homes comes news of
the nameless dead.

But she moulds them to her measure, her desperate
desolate sons ;
She gives them hearts to fight and defy, hard hands to
carry her guns
With a courage stern as her fastnesses, in the day—come
soon or late—
When an enemy proud beats challenge loud at the bars
of her golden gate.

She gives success in the seeking, her treasure is hope that
flies,
Her losing is greatest gaining, her struggle is goal and
prize ;
And far in the lonely desert she holds in eternal guard
The pride to live, and the strength to die—and these are
Australia's Reward.

ALICE, AND I, AND MEMORY.

We supped together in modest state—

Alice, and I, and Memory.

We supped together : the hour was late.

"He will not mind, for once!" she said.

And I smiled, and she, and nodded her head.

And the silver shafts in her brown hair gleamed,

And my face was sad with the grief of Time ;

Yet, "Do you remember . . . that night . . . we
dreamed?"

Her eyes flashed Memory over the years,

And I looked, and saw . . . "O Alice, not tears!"

So I filled her glass, and bade her quaff—

But she, merrily : "No, till your lips touch!"

And I touched, and she, with her old-time laugh.

And Memory stood by the glasses' brink

And oh! so tenderly watched us drink.

I was a youth, and she was a maid :

Our eyes were bright, and we locked warm hands

And gazed at the Future unafraid . . .

And midnight was chiming! . . . Ah, Alice! ah me!

How old, how sad, was Memory.

A FAREWELL.

To J.M.

Sayonara ! to the cherry-blossoms fading
With the fading romance of their skies,
To the pools where the storks wander wading,
To the idyl of beauty that flies :
For the dream of Japan in her dies
With the sorrow of a soul lost in trading—
And an echo of far cannonading
From sad Fusi-yama replies,
Sayonara !

Methought, at her merry masquerading
The mousme stood in surprise,
And she wrung little hands of upbraiding
And sobbed with the wildest of cries :
—Ah, she knows the grief of good-byes,
Sayonara !

PARKES.

So ! he's dead, and covered under—
This, our mightiest Son of Thunder !

What manner of man was he who lay
In the coffin we carried yesterday ?
Was this great Parkes ? Nay, sirs, not so !
Parkes the great died long ago :
This was his simulacrum, shell,
Husk with kernel rotted out ;
Prayed the priest and tolled the knell
For a body whose soul was blotted out ;
This of greatness had no tittle,
Hardly was he Parkes the little.
Parkes the patriot, democrat,
Parkes the denouncer of privilege,
Parkes with the pen that flashed as a sword
In Humanity's fierce Liberation-war—
That was long ago buried :
This, whom we buried, slew him.
This fanned feud to bitter hate,
Rising early, sleeping late,
That from party strife the dower
He might gain, of place and power.

This . . . he's dead, and covered under—
Once our mightiest Son of Thunder !

What was Parkes ? He was a source
Of heat, not light ; not mind, but force ;
Milking brains until they ran
Dry to fill his big brain pan.
Genius ? No ! but say this, too ;
Genius oft his chariot drew.
Some giants live on fleshly doles ;
Parkes was a cannibal of souls.
What was Parkes ? an avalanche,
Carrying all before him ;
When a weaker barred the path,
Crushed and overbore him.
He had mass, momentum, weight ;
He was ruthless, too, as Fate . . .
See the steel from a magnet fly
When a greater magnet passes by !
So would Parkes o'ercome the crowd
Of lesser men, whose wills he bowed
With the strength of his grand vitality,
His " commanding personality."

Now . . . he's dead and covered under—
This, our mightiest Son of Thunder.

* * *

Think of those sullen English serfs
Struggling, straining muscle and thew,
Forcing from barren glebe its due . . .
See ! as fall the reluctant turfs,
Each gives its atom of life in solution
To build up Parkes's " constitution " !
Parkes ! —their force not with him fails ;
They helped to build up New South Wales.

Parkes was the Parkes we used to see
Because of his yokel ancestry ;
These gave fuel for his flame,
Bones and blood to build his name ;
Here, once more then, see how knocks
Flesh-and-Spirit's paradox !

Not our greatest, not our best,
He who's dead and covered under :
Weary was he ; let him rest—
This, our mightiest Son of Thunder !

SYDNEY IN THE SPRING.

TO D. O'R.

A song ! a song ! with a chorus strong for the sweet
September days
When Australia smiles with a lover's wiles in the
Sun's adoring rays ;
When the low coast sways in a purple haze to the Ocean's
nursing croon,
And the beaches white are hushed and bright in the
dreamy afternoon.

Ah, now we hear the heart of the year ! for the young
trees leap and glow,
And nesting birds speak hot love-words as they flit from
a dancing bough ;
And he who lists through dawning mists to the joy of
Mother Earth
May feel the thrill of her bosom still in the old eternal
birth.

But who shall scorn the bliss o' the morn by the shining
cliffs and bays,
Where the harbour's view, like a jewel blue, enchants
the lingering gaze :
And who shall grieve in the glamour of eve when the
city's dusky ring
Is starred with lights for the passionate nights of Sydney
in the Spring.

Then forth, hie forth to the call of the Earth that marries
the call of the blood,
For the Bush is a bower of leaf and flower, and the new
sap mounts in a flood ;
And there's none so poor who will follow the lure but he
shall be a king
On a scented throne of the wattle blown for Sydney in the
Spring.

And the lass whose eyes have the dew of the skies, O,
she shall be his queen,
And the twain shall sport in a golden court 'neath a roof
of chequered green ;
For this is the song the ages long by the whole wide world
obeyed,
That lovers unite in the Spring's delight, and ever a
man with a maid.

THE LAST CAMP.

To H. C.

We found him where the empty river-bed
Ended his hope, and left him but to die—
Alone, unwatched, without one pitying sigh
To ease his parting ; so his soul was sped.
And yet—it seemed so strange—his pillowed head
Lay quietly at rest, fronting the sky ;
His mouth was smiling still, his brow held high ;
Almost a man he looked, lying there dead.

The sun had burned him, storms had beaten him,
This nameless, ageless wanderer, who threw
His load of troubles down, willing to cease.
Since life had turned to him a face so grim
He smiled at death with the last breath he drew.
Grievous his struggle, but how grand his peace.

THREE LADIES AND A LOOKING-GLASS.

The last time I saw Jimmy O'Neill, he was playing the same old Boucicault parts with the Holloway Company, and playing them admirably as ever, with the tender, husky brogue that I delight in. The first time I saw him——

It was years ago. I was sub-editor, leader-writer, and the very youthful dramatic critic of a bygone paper. Of all the theatrical people who came and went in a lively year I can recollect without nudging only two—a lady and a gentleman. The lady was a Miss Cushman—not the great Adelaide, of course ; but a lesser artist who was infinitely pleased at being told, with the easiest rhyme, that city-man and bush-man came to see Miss Cushman. The gentleman was just Jimmy O'Neill.

I came down to the theatre one evening, at about ten minutes past eight, to find nothing doing. Nothing on the stage, at least ; though the audience was beginning to do things with its feet and hands and mouths in the horrid way that an audience has. The curtain hung ominously still ; and, when the audience ceased for a moment to make its noise, another smaller muffled noise penetrated from behind the scenes.

Using the privilege of a very youthful dramatic critic, very proud of his vocation, I went round and followed the voices to the door of the principal dressing-room. The door was shut. At the door, with his head bent to

the keyhole, and a crowd of emotions chasing each other over the florid and expressive countenance of Conn or Myles—whichever it was that evening—was Jimmy O'Neill. He was stage-managing; but it seemed that something had gone wrong with the stage or the management. A little behind was a lady looking like a very indignant lady, apparently half-dressed for the part of Eily, if it was Eily's turn that evening. Around these two were collected a dozen other actors and actresses in full grease-paint, with all the scene-shifters and hangers-on of the theatre. Only the members of the orchestra were missing. They were in front, endeavouring to calm the rising passions of the audience with plaintive Irish melodies.

As I came up, Jimmy O'Neill was murmuring through the keyhole: "What's that ye say? Eh? Say ye will, now, there's a good gurrl!"

And through the door of the dressing-room a female voice said very decisively:

"I won't!"

Jimmy turned a flushed face to me and the world at large. "The devil's in her," he said.

"Very well, Mr. O'Neill," (this was the indignant Eily). "You have my last word. I don't play to-night. (Staccato and very emphatically)—"If—I—do—not—get—my—large—mirror—I—do—not—play—to-night. I hope I make myself quite clear." (The child unborn could have apprehended her). "That is my last word, Mr. O'Neill."

She turned and flounced into obscurer regions.

Jimmy raised his tragic mask once more.

"The devil's in her, too," he informed the universe.

"And the devil's in the audience," said I. "Listen!"

There was no need to listen; the noise was deafening. Crash!—howl!—crash! Yells. Whistles. Hoarse voices: "Up with the rag!" Bang! thump-bang!! thump! And through it all, gently meandering between the crevices and pauses of the riot, came "The Last Rose of Summer," like a trickle of scented water in Gehenna.

"Yis, three divils. Hell's loose in this theatre to-night," said Jimmy O'Neill.

In a pause to mop his face carefully he exposed the situation. This was an all-star company—or a no-star company—whichever you like. There were three ladies—young (naturally), beautiful (undoubtedly), and accomplished (of course)—each with an equal claim to lead (and, it follows in defiance of the logic of Euclid, each with a greater claim to lead than the others).

And "the delicate question which, arose."

Jimmy O'Neill, as stage-manager, had answered the question in a manner worthy of Solomon. There were six acting days in the week; three into six goes twice. For two days, then, Miss De Lacy would lead. For two days, in her turn, Miss Montmorency. And for two days, Miss De Vere. Equal justice; and the audience could decide which of the three stars shone with the greatest lustre.

The ladies could find fault with the compromise; but they could find no valid reason for revolt. None of them had been definitely engaged as "star" with a

stipulation of the largest type used in the advertisements, and letters not less than three inches high on the bills. Miss Montmorency did indeed point out that the evasion was futile, since genius will out, and "I lead naturally, whoever takes the leading part." Miss De Lacy immediately seized the idea, and expressed it as her own. Miss De Vere sniffed. Have you ever seen a star sniff? Have you ever seen an unacknowledged star, whose radiance is temporarily obscured by a conspiracy of the management's minions, sniff? Why are these marvellous effects achieved only off the stage?

So on Monday Miss De Lacy was the Colleen Bawn. I have no doubt that Jimmy O'Neill privately told her that she was "the most iligant Colleen that iver sthepped." I have no doubt that he privately told Miss Montmorency and Miss De Vere exactly the same thing. What does the renowned Shakespeare say? He says (by the mouth of a female character):

"Alas, poor women! make us but believe,
Being compact of credit, that you love us.
Though others have the arm, show us the sleeve;
We in your motion turn, and you may move us."

Some stage-managers read Shakespeare. Other stage-managers do not need to read Shakespeare.

At the period I speak of, in the theatre I speak of, there was only one decent dressing-room, proper for a star. The others were shocking little cupboards, without room to swing a cat in, much less a leading lady. And the looking-glasses! You know those disgusting strips of glass six inches by four, with a brownish-reddish frame—price 9d., commercially. But in the large dressing-room, by some strange chance, there stood a large mirror, quite a monster among mirrors—one would call it the

most magnificent theatre-mirror in Australasia. Not only did it exhibit you full-length, but it was without spot or blemish, and it disengaged a soft moony radiance that glorified the gazer.

Naturally, as soon as the ladies came to the theatre, Miss De Lacy ran up to the splendid looking-glass and said, "Oh." Naturally the next thing she said was, "I'll have this room." "But, dear," said Miss Montmorency. And, "But, dear, excuse me," said Miss De Vere. There was a short, sharp skirmish, and Solomon was called. Again his decision was worthy of Solomon.

"The lady who takes the principal part will be wanting the largest dressing-room; so, of course, ye will take it in turn, ladies."

"Then it's my first turn," said Miss De Lacy, and was immediately installed. Miss Montmorency and Miss De Vere retreated to the cupboards, consoling themselves moderately. A night would come.

It came. It was Wednesday night. Miss De Lacy had fallen from the heavens, and Miss Montmorency was the Colleen. And then Miss De Lacy revolted. What woman will blame her? She could not, no, she could not leave that noble mirror. And whether she could or no, she would not, no, she would not!

That was what she was telling Jimmy O'Neill through the keyhole.

Miss De Lacy had come down early, had taken possession of the large dressing-room and the large mirror, and had locked the door. Miss Montmorency, arriving flushed with the premonition of her triumph, ten minutes later, had passed, with a series of "quick changes," through a succession of massive emotions. Surprise! Incredulity! Alarm! Indignation! Horror! Despair!

"For you know, dear, I am the leading lady of this company, whatever the part I play," cooed the sweet voice through the keyhole.

Miss Montmorency ran for Jimmy O'Neill. To that wary veteran it seemed a case for diplomacy. "Niver you mind, Miss Montmorency; but it's nearly eight o'clock. You go and commince dressing, and I'll have her out in two shakes of a lamb's tail." Then commenced the parley that had led up to the scene at a quarter past eight. And Miss De Lacy had dragged all the furniture in the dressing-room, bar the big mirror, against the door.

At twenty minutes past eight everybody had lost patience except Miss De Lacy, who was gurgling information of her scenic triumphs from behind the fortifications. The theatre, viewed from the proscenium, would have served Dante for another vision—his worst; and Jimmy had to give his orders thrice before the carpenter heard and came with an axe.

After that it was short work. Down went the door, over went the chairs and the dressing-table. Miss De Lacy was dragged forth weeping; Miss Montmorency was hustled in flaming. The curtain rose at half-past eight, and I have no doubt Miss Montmorency was artificially marvellous, but I have forgotten. Miss De Lacy was possibly frozen pokers, but that also I have forgotten. I have even forgotten Miss De Vere.

I remember only the glorious mutiny of the big mirror, and how it was quelled by Jimmy O'Neill, whom I last saw playing the same old Boucicault parts with the Holloway Company, and playing them admirably as ever, with the insinuating brogue that curls round the cockles of your heart, the tender, husky brogue that I delight in.

RONDEAUS

FOR CLARIBEL IN DISTRESS.

Always, for ever mine ! Her mother brow,
Before her kisses, told me ; and her low
Ravishing voice, and those dear fluttering doves
She calls her eyes, and all the tender loves
That breathe in every dimple a shy vow.

Yet, and to-day ! she doubts. “ This bird, this bough,
This song : will they endure if passion go ?
Will it be summer in my lover's groves
Always, for ever ? ”

Ah ! if she only knew ! if she knew how
I yearn to hold her, make her happy, strow
Love-petals for tired feet : that never moves
My good thought from her, howe'er folly roves,
She would believe that I can love her now,
Always, for ever.

FOR PHYLLIDA, PUTTING ON HER HAT.

Blue ice, blue fire, faces of blue baboons,
Blue milk, the melancholy blue of moons,
 Blue-apron'd butchers menacing blue flies,
 Blue water in blue distance of blue skies.
Blue-stockings dancing reckless rigadoons
To chase blue devils in the dismal noons,
Blue-wreathing smoke, the blue of bloomy prunes,
 Blue crabs and blue turquoises, but Her eyes
 Blue.

Her bluest veins loiter in kissing runes,
Lovers' blue study since those Royal Spoons
 Stirred the blue dusk of Egypt with their sighs . .
 And our Cythera down the harbour lies :
 (Let's hope the Nocent Waterspout won't rise !)
" Embark ! " She signals, for Her Hat's (eftsoons !)
 Blue.

FOR MAUD, AFTER SHE CAME INTO THE
GARDEN.

Madonna, let me softly tell you this
Close in your ear, that I may gain a kiss
Coming and going—like the loitering bee
Our flowery poets use in simile—
Making the tale excuse for greater bliss.

Let me . . . (*O, sweet aposiopesis!*) . . .
Tell all you are to me. (*That was a miss:*
You moved your head.) But listen! (*And count three,*
Madonna.)

Ah, no! . . . (*In case the other jealous is*) . . .
You dwell so high: speech falls in the abyss
(*Ears are but suburbs . . . pleasant, we agree*)
Look in my eyes . . . (*Quick!—past thirteen*) . . .
and see!
Give me your lips, my heart's metropolis,
Madonna!

FOR ONE OF THE THREE PRECEDING.

Emerald ! you who, in the olden time,
Lay on her breast and heard its hidden rhyme :
 When her sweet passions fluttered to be free
 Did not your pale heart strive in sympathy ?
In your green depth glowed there no rose sublime ?
Or, if her spirit wandered in a clime
Of tranquil joy, you were her gentle mime :
 One happy wave above a halcyon sea,

Emerald !

Alas ! Love's temple bells no longer chime :
Dead are his altar-fires ; his rites a crime :
 Now from my life the years fall piteously
 As fall the wan leaves from a stricken tree ;
And you are all the hoarding of my prime,

Emerald !

SONNETS

ON THE BURNING OF G. DARRELL'S MS. PLAYS.

Ye daughters of Australia, weep for George
Darrell ! and mourn that desolating night
When heavy Austral drama was alight
And sparkling (One Night Only !) like a forge.
Perchance " The Mystery of the Melbourne Morgue " *
That awful conflagration solved at sight :
Yea, the devouring element would bite
" The Haunted Hatter of the Gippsland Gorge ! "

But Genius shall not perish from the earth !
" Villains, unhand her ! " See it rise and ride,
One leaf above the pyre ! a phœnix boon,
Bearing to distant shores in billionth birth
The deathless phrase that worship shall divide
In alien lands with idols of the moon.

*See poetic license, B 387541, granted to J P , Esq., of Melbourne.

FOR A LONDON COMMERCIAL.

BY OUR REPORTER.

(In *The Standard*).

Wheat opened steady and unchanged, and developed a buoyant tone on firm cables, a bullish "Price Current Report," covering of shorts, and liberal export shipments. The market later declined on realising, sympathy in corn, and a slack export demand, and closed easy at $\frac{1}{2}$ c. to $\frac{1}{4}$ c. fall. Spot easy.—*The Standard*.

Wheat, for the anguish of the starving :—nay,
 The market opens steadily,—but lean
 And hark how at its verge cables sigh in
 Determined. Ha ! then buoyantly away ;
 For shorts are covered at the brink of day,
 And export shipments tug upon the string
 That sobs, while operators rise to sing
 The Price Report is bullish ! Do not stray :
 On realising, prices downward creep ;
 There's sympathy in corn—all corn is grass,
 And cool again the export side. Let be :—
 Say nothing unto bulls for fear they weep
 One to three-eighths cent. fall.—Close easy was ;
 Spot easy. (So is immortality).

FOR ALICE, IN AUTUMN.

Alice sits weeping in the garden chair.
Yet Love had poured for us a rosy chalice
That spills, alas ! in ruin . . . 'tis by malice
Of some sly deity who harbours there !

And as I stand, " Ah, please to go ! " the fair
Sentinel lily hears, who bends her calice
Over the garden chair and weeping Alice.
Yet going, " Do not—leave—me ! " thrills the air.

Wondering, I watch a sad cloud hide the sun :
A cloud—a mood—hint for a lover's part !
I'll clasp the soft hand by the lily sleeping. . . .

It clings ! A sudden ray gleams in the dun,
And leaps down gulfs of space to light my heart
Where, in the garden chair, Alice smiles weeping.

IN MEMORIAM TRANQUILLISSIMAM,

JOHN FARRELL.

Dead ? I suppose so ! And what does it matter ?
I sleep well, annyway—and what's the odds ?
Isn't it perfect calm we give the gods ?
—And calm is best, in spite of all the chatter.
I don't know that I'd care to grow much fatter,
Duller and wearier—keep on pickling rods
To beat old age with. So, as who's-this nods,
The earlier end is better than the latter.

Besides, I've done iny share of hurrying :
Let others take the pace—I won't be missed :
P'r'aps two or three will think of me—say one,
To save me from the fate of Tomlinson—
You know it ? Fine thing ? . . . Well, I won't insist . .
Then t h a t ' s all right—and what's the use of
worrying ?

BALLADES

OF THE BIRTH-RATE.

" O listen to our tale of woe ! "

The statisticians cry in chorus :

" The birth-rate's gone to Billyho ! "

(Which lies between Virgo and Taurus :
You'll find it in a star thesaurus.)

" Where's the bambino you should carry,
Madonna ? Isis ! where is Horus ? "

—But why don't statisticians marry ?

It seems the girls are strangely slow,

Or else the wives who should adore us

Too often grunt the naughty " No ! "

Which lies between Virgo and Taurus.

" Thank you," they say ; " but babies bore us :

Take your stakissticks to Old Harry ! "

And if we grumble, they ignore us :

—But why don't statisticians marry ?

" Amant," they calculate ; but, O !

If " Amo ! Amo ! " they would roar us,

'T would quicken more the glacier's flow

Which lies between Virgo and Taurus !

Spirit of Sairey, hovering o'er us,

So to dispoge things do not tarry :

Stiffen the knees ! urge the pylorus !

—But why don't statisticians marry ?

LUCINA ! find the plaster porous

Which lies between Virgo and Taurus,

And then we'll be as happy as Larry !

—But why don't statisticians . . . marry ?

OF PURPLE PIMPLES.

"Purple pimples are chronic."—*Ladies' Paper*.

Moons are a fickle fry ;
 Suns are escaping gas ;
 See Pan-Creation die
 Of enlarged pancreas !
 The universal mass
 Lacks even architectonic :
 God is Man's looking-glass . . .
 But purple pimples are chronic.

The amaranthine lie
 Arraigns its purple class :
 Beauty must Helen sigh ;
 Valour, Leonidas :
 Where's Tyre ? where hippocras ?
 I ask with pen ironic
 (In purple ink, alas !) . . .
 But purple pimples are chronic.

And Chronos, throned on high
 Above the vast morass,
 Sees matter form and fly,
 Sees Maya gleam and pass :
 The worlds are mown as grass :
 His scythe, a leech laconic,
 Shrives all—nefas aut fas . . .
 But purple pimples are chronic.

ENVOY.

Tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse,
 Even the rat bubonic :
 Omnia vanitas !
 But purple pimples are chronic.

OF QUERIES.

Why do the girls always fumble their backs ?

(Since a skirt can be buttoned, a blouse can be holed.)

Why haven't authors got money in stacks ?

But why is hotel hot-water cold ?

Why does a marriage turn saint into scold ?

Why is a Spring when it hasn't been coiled ?

And why is a widow so quickly consoled ?

But why is restaurant roast-beef boiled ?

Why when a " huge conflagration " " attacks,"

Does " the element " " roar " and " devour," un-
controlled

By the country reporter, whom nobody smacks ?

But why is hotel hot-water cold ?

And why is manuscript posted rolled,

When an editor's soul is so easily soiled

By language the editor cannot hold ?

But why is restaurant roast-beef boiled ?

Why hasn't everyone all that he lacks ?

Why isn't all that is glittering, gold ?

Why isn't everything sealskin that's sacques ?

But why is hotel hot-water cold ?

And why does all beauty return to the mould ?

Why is the clover so rare quatrefoiled ?

Why aren't our bankers as soft as of old ?

But why is restaurant roast-beef boiled ?

HINT, BY WAY OF MESSAGE.

ROBINSON ! ask not, overbold,

" But why is hotel hot-water cold ? "

Brown and Jones have the answer oiled :

" But why is restaurant roast-beef boiled ? "

OF THE SEAT OF LOVE.

To W. K. F.

The liver is a golden flower
 That gaily blooms on bowling-greens,
 Expanding in the sunny shower
 Of conscientious seltzogenes ;
 But if to orange supervenes
 That execrable colour mauve,
 Even Diana quickly gleans
 The liver is the seat of love.

The liver, from its secret bower,
 With forty cubic inches leans
 To cull th' intoxicating hour
 That comes alike to cats and queens.
 Four passionate pounds, behind the screens,
 It weighs, and whispers Venus' dove
 To tell the other go-betweens
 The liver is the seat of love.

The heart has circulation power
 And vigorously incarnadines
 The blood that makes the liver tower
 The richest of our magazines :
 Yet folk of forty, full of beans,
 Declining shares of pudding, prove
 This truth of surplus saccharines—
 The liver is the seat of love.

L'ENVOY.

HELEN! thy beauty is a means
 To show the bile doth gently rove
 Like those Nicæan barquentines . . .
 The liver is the seat of love.

VERSIONS.

Quando cadran le foglie et tu verrai
A cercar la mia croce in campo santo,
In un cantuccio la ritroverai
E molto fior le saran nati accanto.

Cogli tu allor pé tuoi biondi capelli
I fiori nati dal mio cor. Son quelli
I canti che pensai ma che non scrissi,
Le parole d'amor che non ti dissi.

OLIVEDO GUERRINI.

Lorsque vous verrez une tombe obscure
Où nul n'a jamais répandu des fleurs,
Couples amoureux, passant d'aventure,
Les fleurs qui sont là ne sont pas des fleurs.

Ce qui sort ainsi, parfumé, de terre,
Ce sont, avec moi disparus jadis,
Les pensers d'amour qu'il m'a fallu taire
Et les mots d'amour que je n'ai pas dits.

LUCIEN DE FALLER.

When the leaves fall, and to the burial-ground
You come to seek the grave where I lie lowly,
In some dim corner you shall find a mound
With many a gentle flower to make it holy.

Then, for that fair gold head, dear, pluck betimes
Blossoms my heart has nourished to enfold you :
These are my dreams of sweet unwritten rhymes,
Words of my love that I have never told you.

PHILOMELA.

Deux monts plus vastes que l'Hécla
Surplombent la pâle contrée
Où mon désespoir s'éveilla.

Solitude qu'un rêve crée !
Jamais l'aube n'étincela
Dans cette ombre démesurée.

La nuit ! la nuit ! rien au delà !
Seule une voix monte, éplorée ;
O ténèbres, écoutez-la.

C'est ton chant qu'emporte Borée,
Ton chant où mon cri se mêla,
Eternelle désespérée,

Philoméla ! Philoméla !

CATULLE MENDES.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Two hills more huge than Hecla swell
To overhang the region pale
Where first my vast despair befell.

A solitude that dreams exhale !
Never the dawn shone out to quell
The endless darkness of that vale.

Night ! Night ! that nothing can dispel !
A single voice ascends in wail ;
O shadows, hearken to its spell.

It is thy song borne on the gale,
Thy dirge that my cry suiteth well,
Hopeless eternally dost ail,

O Philomel ! O Philomel !

A TIGHT PLACE.

Through the half-open door of the bar-parlour I caught a glimpse of a seedy man standing at the counter, evidently making conversation with the barman in the hope of getting a drink. I didn't think he would succeed. The barman was tough.

I had asked the boys in, and we were talking of tight places. Willis had good-naturedly given us his tightest place—a thrilling experience in Central Australia, out west from the Diamantina among the water-conserving frogs described by Lumholtz the naturalist. These frogs, it seems, grow to an enormous size, and are provided with a bag or pouch in which they carry sufficient water to tide them over dry seasons. Thus all that a Diamantina bushman has to do when he runs short of water is to catch a frog and squeeze him over the billy, getting from a pint to a quart of delicious clear fluid.

Willis told us how some of these frogs, by accident, got hold of Lumholtz's book, and became so full of stinking pride that they swelled up until they squeezed all their water out of their bags, and perished miserably of thirst next dry season. Others, more cautious, took care not to swell physically, but puffed up mentally to such an extent that when Willis got bushed and tried to squeeze one of them, the whole mob congregated and pulled him out of the saddle, keeping him prisoner for three weeks while he fed on his horse. This was Willis's tight place.

He got out of it by pretending to fall in love with a frog princess, who stationed relays of frogs, each carrying half-a-pound of horse and half-a-pint of water, at intervals of a mile all along the road to civilization. Of course, as Willis explained, only a good-looking fellow could have adopted this expedient. It seems that lady frogs are very amorous and susceptible, and Willis worked his heavy blonde moustache for all it was worth. The frog princess had never before been kissed by anyone with hair on his lip, and was so tickled that she agreed to elope with him. Willis took her a mile beyond the last relay, and then he squeezed her and fried her legs and walked into Birdsville.

The opinion of the company was voiced by Ned, who said Willis would be an awful brute if he were not such a confounded liar.

“ Ahem ! ” came a slight cough.

I looked up. The seedy man was standing in the doorway. (The barman must have been tough.)

He was an exceedingly seedy man—as seedy a man as you will find in Sydney Domain between Mrs. Macquarie’s Seat and the Cathedral Gates—“ which is coming it strong, yet I state but the facts.” The domainer smells seedy, and wears seedy clothes : but often, if he were washed and dressed, he would lose his seediness entirely. Domain seediness is sometimes an acquired taste, like marriage.

Here, the seediness was characteristic. The man himself was seedy to an inexpressible degree. If his filthy rags were counted as righteousness, there was no such shining virtue under heaven ; and his hat was

simply impossible. I omit his boots : he should have omitted them too.

His form was thin, his face was thin and dirty, with lank hair and a stubble of beard. It was absolutely characterless and expressionless ; or, rather, every trace of character had merged in a single grand expression. It seemed as if a simoom had passed over the man and blotted out all his features, leaving only a great desert with its eternal drouth.

" I beg pardon, gentlemen," he said ingratiatingly ; " but you were speaking of tight places, and I was once in a remarkably tight place. If you care to hear my story, I might, perhaps—stimulated by a little of this excellent liquor ? "

He spoke huskily, but easily and correctly. I rang for another glass and motioned the seedy man to a chair. Willis and Ned and Charlie stared at him, but said nothing. He helped himself to a half-tumbler of whisky, which he tossed off neat. His little winking eyes grew bright, and his back straightened. He remained standing, facing us, with one hand resting on the chair.

" Gentlemen," he said, " this is excellent liquor. And now for my story.

" Two years ago I was in London, staying with a friend who lives in James-street, Westbourne Terrace. I have since met with reverses of fortune, as doubtless you notice, but at that time I moved in very good society indeed.

" My friend was in business in the city. When he came in about four o'clock on the day of which I am speaking, we went for a walk in Hyde Park. The day was a cloudy one, towards the end of Spring, and the

Row was not lively. We strolled down to the corner and then turned home again by a path skirting Park Lane. Near the Marble Arch, I noticed a sailor and a woman very much excited. 'I gave it to you, Liz.,' said the sailor. 'No, you didn't, Jim,' she answered. And they wrangled loudly.

"As we passed them, the sailor turned round. 'Perhaps these gentlemen 'll help us,' he said; 'it's a chance.' Then, putting himself in our path, 'Sir, if e'er a one of you will lend poor Jack a sovereign, your honours will never repent it.'"

"'Don't!' whispered my friend; 'it's a do.' But I stopped to hear the man's story. He was a sailor with a home at Gloucester. His ship was sailing that night from Rotherhithe, in the Thames, and his wife had come up in the morning train to bid him good-bye. She had lost her return ticket, and neither had any money. Her train left for Gloucester in half-an-hour.

"'Don't!' again whispered my friend. But I did. I thought the man's face was honest, and a sovereign was nothing to me then. So I gave it to him, with my address pencilled on the back of a card, and we hurried off to escape his vociferous thanks. All the way home my friend rallied me on my folly, recounting numberless stories of the traps set for unwary strangers in London, and he ended by convincing me that my sovereign was gone for ever.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," said the seedy man, taking up the bottle: "I feel my voice getting weak, and this is excellent liquor."

He set the glass down gently, drew his hand across his lips, and resumed.

"That evening my friend, who was a Freemason, had to attend a special meeting of his lodge. I do not know if anyone of you gentlemen is a Mason?"

"I am," said Willis. (Willis considers it inconsistent with his dignity to admit that the world has a single corner into which he has not poked. I heard Ned call him a liar under his breath.)

"In that case, sir," said the seedy man, addressing Willis, "you will understand the necessity of regular attendance at lodge. My friend left me soon after dinner, expecting to return about midnight. I took an easy chair by the window and smoked my cigar, while watching the passers-by. There were not many, for James Street is quiet and ill-lighted. When the cigar was done, I felt chilly and turned to close the window.

"Before I could do so, there was a knock at the sitting-room door. 'What is it, Mrs. Tairsh?' I asked, pausing.

"My friend was a bachelor, and kept only one servant, an old Scotch housekeeper, who had nursed him as a child.

"'If you please, sir,' said Mrs. Tairsh, entering, 'there's a man at the back wishes to see you. He won't come in, but he gave me this card.' And she handed me the card I had given the sailor.

"I was delighted that my judgment was shown to be right, and my friend's as conclusively wrong; and I followed Mrs. Tairsh out to the back, where the sailor stood shamefacedly. He had returned to his ship and borrowed a sovereign, and he tendered it to me with profuse expressions of gratitude.

"I wished him to keep the money, but he would not hear of such a thing. More, he produced a bottle of rum from his pocket, and insisted that I should take some. So the housekeeper brought glasses, and we pledged one another at the back door.

"The memory of that rum," said the seedy man thoughtfully, "is with me now. Perhaps the odour of this most excellent liquor" . . . and he sighed heavily as he filled his glass nearly to the top. Ned half-rose, but I motioned him back.

After drinking, the sailor wrung my hand heartily and went away; Mrs. Tairsh took the glasses into the kitchen, and I walked back through the hall to the sitting-room. When I reached it, my eyes, accommodated to darkness, were dazzled by the light, and I stumbled into the room without seeing anything. Suddenly my forehead came violently into contact with something cold and metallic. It was the muzzle of a revolver."

The seedy man paused. "Perhaps one of you gentlemen is a doctor?" he suggested.

"I am," said Willis. (Willis is a mining broker connected with several notorious "wild cats.")

"Then, sir," pursued the seedy man, "you will understand the physiological effect of terror upon the nerves, and their reaction upon the human organism. When I felt that revolver pressing my forehead, my heart stopped beating while you could count five slowly; then it literally galloped—thudding against my ribs with the quick, muffled stroke of a racer's hoofs upon soft turf. In an instant I was bathed in sweat; my head swam;

a frightful vertigo seized me. I think I tried to scream ; but my voice died away in an inarticulate murmur.

"Of course none of you gentlemen is what is called a coward ?" proceeded the seedy man, regarding Willis intently.

"I—," said Willis, and stopped abruptly. We all looked at him. "No, go on !" he said.

"Gentlemen," said the seedy man, "cowardice is rightly blamed, but it is wrong to blame the coward unless to strengthen the bias in favour of bravery. The coward is cowardly by constitution. His nerves can no more help vibrating to a sudden shock than a harp-string can help vibrating when touched by the player. With people of a certain physique, bravery is merely apathy. Give me time to summon mental reserves and I will face any danger. Confront me suddenly with an unexpected peril, and intellect and volition are lost in sensation. I cannot think or act, I can only feel. Thus I am conventionally a rank coward.

"Yet I did not faint. I was remotely aware that a handkerchief had been forced into my mouth and tied there ; that I was pushed back into a chair ; and that several forms were flitting about the room.

"At a jump consciousness returned. I opened my eyes and saw three men watching me. The central figure was that of a short man of slight build, with bald conical head and a curious clean-shaven face of a deep pink-red colour wherever the skin was visible. His eyes were the most extraordinary I ever saw in a man—mere slits in the skin, over which heavy lids closed fold on fold without a vestige of eyebrows or eyelashes. His expression was keen and mocking.

“ He had two companions—mere burglars in livery ; heavy thick-set men masked with crape and roughly dressed. The leader was in dinner dress, with a fine diamond flashing from his shirt front.

“ ‘ Well ? ’ he said sardonically. I shuddered in spite of myself.

“ ‘ Better close the window, Jones,’ he said, ‘ while we are conversing with this gentleman. Harrison ! Kindly fix him in the chair.’

“ His assistants hastened to obey orders. One shut the unlucky window by which, evidently, they had just obtained entrance. The other produced some thin cord and bound me tightly in my chair. On damp days I can feel those ligatures still.

“ ‘ Didn’t you hear the dog barking ? ’ said the Man with the Eyes, darting insupportable flashes of green light at me from their narrow orifices.

“ I reflected. I had heard my friend’s dog barking when I was pledging the sailor in his own rum. It had barked violently, straining at its chain ; but I paid no heed.

“ ‘ That’s where you made the mistake,’ said Eyes, coolly reading my thoughts ; ‘ a dog is better worth listening to than a man. I fear your neglect will have unpleasant consequences. Of course, you know what I am here for ? ’

“ Of course I did. My friend’s house was not only worth robbing for the plate, but he kept in a safe in his bedroom upstairs jewels which had belonged to his mother, worth some thousands of pounds.

“ ‘ Your good Mrs. Tairsh is busy with her crockery. Listen ! I will talk to her presently. I may say that I

expected to have only her to deal with. I thought you were a Mason, and would go with your friend to the lodge. From some points of view, it is unlucky you are not a Mason.

“ ‘ You see,’ Eyes went on, ‘ when you hastily came into the room you took us by surprise, and I had not time to concert measures to receive you. The result is that you have seen my face, which I object to hiding in the vulgar fashion ; and this is awkward, for henceforward you are a witness to identity. Otherwise I could easily drug or hypnotise you into unconsciousness, as I shall drug or hypnotise Mrs. Tairsh ; and you might continue to live. As it is, owing to that little thing called memory, of which I cannot deprive you in any way, it is necessary you should die.’

“ I could only stare at him with ghastly set face.

“ ‘ Let me see,’ he mused ; ‘ a bullet is out of the question ; the knife is brutal . . . ha ! my lancet ! Jones, loose the gentleman’s left arm ! Harrison, that carafe on the sideboard ! ’

“ In a minute my flaccid arm was loosened, and firmly held by one of the men ; Eyes dexterously slit my sleeve and made a wide slash in the brachial artery with his lancet ; the other man held a glass water-jug to catch the leaping fluid.

“ As soon as I saw the blood my strength seemed to return, and I struggled desperately but impotently to free myself, though almost choking with the gag.

“ ‘ That is good,’ said the horrible leader ; ‘ your heart is weak ; I feared we were going to have trouble in getting a flow. But take care, my dear sir, you will spatter the

furniture ; and I wish, above all things, to do this little job cleanly.'

" But by degrees I became quiescent, almost placid. As the blood flowed and my strength ebbed, I passed into a dozing state, in which the phenomena of dual consciousness vividly appeared. I felt that the real Ego was separated from my body, though still in some inexplicable way a part of it ; and while my powers of sensation and thought remained as usual, they seemed things set apart in sub-consciousness, external and irrelevant to the true existence. I-Myself hovered in space, seeing and criticising the strange scene—the dying man extended in the chair ; the ministers of death busy, one in supporting the arm stained with patches of red, the other holding the jug into which the life-stream fell continually ; while close by, with his vulture eyes now wide open, stood the contriver of this grim murder.

" ' Not much longer now,' I heard him say ; while my lower intelligence at the same time seemed to fade away in sleep.

" Suddenly I felt I was free from my body ; heard the words ' That finishes him ! ' and saw my arm, released by the man who was holding it, fall heavily downwards. There was no doubt about it : I was dead.

" I suppose," said the seedy man, pausing to look at Willis, " that none of you gentlemen was ever dead ? "

Willis was silent. The seedy man chuckled.

" Ah, gentlemen," he said, " it is a terrible thing to be dead. Nothing to do ; nothing to eat ; nothing to drink. If you will allow me, this is excellent liquor "

. . and he drained the bottle into his glass and tossed off the spirit with relish. His appearance had greatly

improved since he entered the room. He held himself erect ; his voice was sonorous ; his small eyes flashed ; he even seemed less seedy.

" Well," I said, " go on with the story."

" Gentlemen," said the seedy man, " the story is finished."

" But what did you do ? What followed ? "

" Gentlemen, I did nothing. Nothing followed."

" But you said you were dead ? "

" Gentlemen, I am still dead."

" But—but—," I stammered wildly—" you must tell —you must explain yourself ! "

" Gentlemen, I never explain myself. Explanation is fatal. The man who explains himself is lost."

" But . . . ! "

I looked down, my mind a tangle of whirling sensations. I looked up, my mind a whirl of tangled volitions.

The seedy man had vanished.

" Those are your drinks," said Charlie.

THE ADVENTURE

To R.Q.

(Mulga Bill loq. :)

Boys, somewhere in Glory—I don't know quite where ;
But wherever in Glory they make 'em, I swear
I dreamt I had given up slinging of rhymes,
For I dropped on a patch of old Lawson's Good Times.

An' I wanders along through those Good Times, o' course,
Till I spies a gray cuddy that's Ogilvie's Horse ;
And you bet that I hops on that Horse and I ride
Around those Good Times on the other bright side.

Well, I keeps my eyes skinned 'case there's anything
wrong,

An' I watches the boundary, joggin' along,
Till all of a heap I see Daley's Lost Girl
Asleep by a beautiful river o' pearl !

Then I picks up that Girl, an' I sets her behind,
An' (on Ogilvie's Horse) off we go like the wind
(Through Lawson's Good Times) till I whistles Hullo !
For I spots Quinn a-watchin' the Mystery grow.

So I says, " Good-day, Quinn," an' he says, " Good-day,
you " :

I says, " Give us your Mist," an' he gives that up, too ;
Then with Ogilvie's Horse and Daley's Lost Girl
An' Quinn's Bag o' Mystery, back I comes whirl.

An' the editors crawls round for poems, o' course,
So I fills 'em up clever with Ogilvie's Horse,
An' I takes Daley's Girl an' I swops her for cash,
An' the Mystery, too, goes in copy kersplash !

For, you see, I was boss of the whole Box of Tricks,
An' I'm not the man to give something for nix ;
So I sells to the finish of Lawson's Good Times—
An', lo and behold, I was slingin' these rhymes !

PHARAOH AUSTRALIS!

"Boomerangs have been found amid the ruins of Thebes."

King William! You who strut our land,
Despised and lonely;
The regal sceptre in your hand
A waddy only:
Though the grudged blanket of an hour
Your robe of state is,
Though the sole ensign of your power
A poor brass plate is,
Though pious folk, with many groans,
Declare you silly,
Though little boys fling scornful stones
And call you Billy:

Attention! We have found you out:
In Thebes the holy
Your ancestor, without a doubt,
Ruled high and lowly:
He was not Papuan, nor yet
A mere Dravidian;
In middle Egypt he was set
Beside the Libyan:
And, when his glory ceased to blaze,
In some strange mer-ship
Hither he came to pass his days
In pure Sun-worship.

He brought you toothsome bunya-dates
For famine's crisis ;
Corroboree corroborates
The rites of Isis :
Instead of pyramid you use
A tree for Mummy
(Since sacred spices are his dues,
The tree is gummy) ;
And thus you do your little best,
O haughty hero !
To prove, however dispossessed,
You still are Pharaoh.

OWED TO WOOLLOOMOOLOO, N.S.W.

A resident of Woolloomooloo has provided a new pathos. He writes to the Sydney press pointing out that "something practical must be done to remove the odium at present associated with the name of Woolloomooloo." It seems that W. is now "one of the healthiest parts of the city . . . bounded on one side by the Domain and on another by the harbour . . . bracing sea-breezes . . . no plague-infested rodent . . . Except a few lanes the streets are all of the regulation width . . . no drains between us and the Darling Harbour." Nevertheless, Woolloomooloo has a tradition: the scent of the roses clings round it still. "Country people will not reside there, and if they stay with relatives they have their letters addressed elsewhere" !—lest their country friends jeer. "Some suggest to alter the name of the whole district to St. Kilda" !

Wake, harp of my country ! and thrill to

A Woolloomoolunatic strain,

For Woolloomooloo is a suburb like few

(If you call it "the Lower Domain").

Wake, harp of my land ! from thy dreaming

And help a delusion to quash,

For its 'air, like a barber's, is oiled by the harbour's

Fine odoriferous wash.

O Woolloomoolily, the lonely !

O Woolloomoolady, my love !

No fever or ague comes ever to plague you :

Your sewers are pure as a dove.

With rents, like your altitudes, modest ;

Society sweet as your drains ;

With all your "outrages" away in dark ages,

What matter your "few little lanes" ?

Your roads are as wide as the widest ;

You bask in a "beautiful view" ;

And, chaste as cucumbers, no John ever lumbers

The maidens of Woolloomooloo.

O Woolloomoolethal no longer !

O Woolloomoolewd nevermore !

When I give up the ghost all the heavenly host

I shall lead to your Beautiful Shore !

On the Woolloomoolittoral, fanned by

The Woolloomoolibertine (?) breeze

(Bringing landlords who languish surcease from their
anguish)

We'll drink to the Woolloomooles ;

We'll be Woolloomoolucrative lodgers

In Woolloomooluxury cast,

And Eternity's stories shall tell of your glories

To the infinite Woolloomoolast !

PAID TO DOODLEKINE, W.A.

Roll a red tongue that riots in the pride
Of vowels strong, sonorous as the sea ;
Gorge a rich ear that will not be denied
Its ravishment of royal melody ;
Yet Aspromont and Montalban no more
Vie with Morocco or with Trebizond,
And Charlemagne on Fontarabia's shore
Shall know his syllables no longer conned :
Their glory and their majesty are thine,
And thou art ours, heroic Doodlekine !

That blessed word Mesopotamia,
In Whitfield's mouth, made even butchers weep ;
Atchafalaya has been murmured far
And wide by devotees in popped sleep ;
But what avails the immemorial noise
And outcry of Castile and Aragon ?
Can Connemara give us former joys ?
Can Oonalaska still demand the bun ?
As stars before the Day their light resign,
These yield and worship thee, O Doodlekine !

Many go hence upon a glittering quest,
Leaving the cherished girls, the friendly home ;
Their hearts beat high with Youth (young men go West)
And sickly they affront the roaring foam ;
They pass the Lioness, Rottnest they spurn,
Then vanish down the vista of the years. . . .
We mourn in vain : they never may return ;
For thou hast poured thy spelling in their ears.
The magic of that spell is like strong wine—
Would thou wert East, delirious Doodlekine !

POOR MARY ANN.

Herbert Spencer, who makes in his *Autobiography* frequent appearances in the character of a ponderous philosophical prig, is at pains to explain that there was no truth in the rumour that he used to be in love with George Eliot. She was not Spencer's "style": in several "first principles" she did not commend herself to the philosophic eye. One imagines that something might be said for the lady.

I put the heavy volumes down,
Glad that the reader's task was over,
And meditated with a frown
How little wit the tomes discover :
Till from the pipe the faces came—
A mid-Victorian generation—
With hers who flung a heart of flame
And scandalised a moral nation.

Hey presto ! did the light burn blue ?
Or was it but a gleam of stocking
That made me murmur " Who are you ? "
And wonder was my reason rocking :
An odour too ! as if all Dis
Were burning papers in a censer ;
And then, a voice said : " Grant me this !
I did not marry Herbert Spencer.

" I know ' Deronda ' 's far too long
And far too ponderously written ;
I know that it is very wrong
To drown a hero like a kitten ;

I know, when Lewes came to woo,
I should have screamed and cried ' Get hence, sir! '
But when you count my sins, say too
I did not marry Herbert Spencer ! "

One moment, in the cloud o'erhead,
" As if a bee had stung it newly,"
A warm lip flashed a rosy red—
And, planté là, I marvelled duly :
The pipe wreathed on to regions far ;
Yet lingered, as the smoke grew denser,
This echo : " Thank my lucky star,
I did not marry Herbert Spencer ! "

THE DYING POET.

Mary! Mary! I am dying! Prop me up to see the dawn!

Let me watch again Aurora stepping o'er the rosy lawn. .
Not that way now, Mary, d—n you! Don't you know
the east from west?

Oh, I beg your pardon, Mary; but we're fretful at the best—

Horace said so: good old Horace. . Eh? your brother? No, no, no! . . .

That will do now. Thank you, Mary. Leave me for a little. . . Go! . . .

Dear Aurora! see her blushing through her misty morning veil!

She has done me faithful service—though she is a trifle stale;

For the tropes are all exhausted—ah! the poet's lot is hard

In a world of weary cynics crying for a brand-new bard.
Yes, I thought I was that bard once—thought that sky
and earth and sea

Called in beauty, called in wonder, to be written up by me;—

And I wrote them up! I did that—seven epics, thirty odes,

Ballads as the stars in number, lyrics in unnumbered loads!

Toil of genius—whose the profit? Sacred Muse! it
wasn't mine :

Though a foolish generation keeps on asking for a sign.
For a sign! as if I hadn't painted mine across the
heavens.

HERE'S YOUR POET! COME AND BUY HIM! and they
came—by six and sevens ;

Came to sneer, and growl, and cavil—till I felt that red-
hot skewers

Would not pierce the blockish skulls of those incompetent
reviewers.

So I paid the printers' bills and wrapped my toga round
my soul,

Writing on, and writing ever, with Posterity for goal.

Now I'm dying—poor and friendless—never introduced
to Fame ;

But I know that Future Ages will do honour to my
name. . .

Mary! Mary! where's that woman? Oh, you're there!
You might stand by :

Try and soothe my last sad moments, since you know I'm
going to die.

Heat some milk, and bring the rum to stop that rattle
in my throat :

Let me have a decent drink before I board old Charon's
boat. . .

There's the postman coming, Mary; never more he'll
come to me—

Me the editors once used to hob-a-nob with, gay and free ;
How my youthful heart would flutter for rejected MSS.—

'Twas in vain! and now the brutes have all forgotten
my address. . .

But the postman's stopping, Mary—surely, Mary, that is queer :

Now, by all the bards of Ossian, I believe he's stopping here !

Off, you gaby ! Goodness me, what is the woman waiting for ? . . .

Give them here, you dolt ! you duffer ! there, you've dropped them on the floor. . .

Three, four, five, six, seven letters—no mistake about the name—

More rum, Mary ! I am fainting. Mary ! Mary ! this is FAME !!

* * *

I think I'm better now, Mary : take that wet rag away : You know I hate my forehead slopped—no, never mind ; obey !

Give me the letters here, Mary, and bring the bottle too ; You never mix it strong enough ; Mary, you never do. Aha !—here's Jones—yes, Jones it is !—" compiling an anthology " . . .

" Make extracts " . . why, of course he can . . that doesn't need apology ;

And Robinson—dear me, how strange !—is " making a collection,"

And begs the honour to include my " Ode to Vivisection." And Bones asks most politely—yes, he asks me : Mary, look !

To add the lustre of my name to grace his little book.

And Simpson wants my autograph—I'll write it now—and hark !

Here's Smith desires my portrait for his " Famous Men of Mark ; "

And Brown would like "some passages of genius" in a letter ;

And Harrison requires my "life," and "will remain my debtor" !

* * *

Fame ! fame at last ! I knew it would come, though it nearly arrived too late ;

But now I am better, now I am well, now I am lord of my fate. . .

Dying ? Who talked about dying ? Not I ! I could conquer a host ;

And I'll answer these gentlemen now, Mary—and you'll have to run to the post.

My brain is on fire—no, it isn't the rum—'tis the genius of ancient delight

Exalts me and thrills me with rapturous bliss, and showers on me images bright.

Quick, give me my dressing-gown, Mary ! don't stand staring there while I write . . .

Now go—and no noise till I'm finished—or I'll murder you, Mary, to-night !

SALVATION EMIGRATION :

BEING A RECORD OF 'APPY 'ANNER'S RECENT PROPOSAL
OF MARRIAGE IN THE MILE-END ROAD, LONDON.

Ho, Winkles Bill ! I've found yer ! Now you come along
o' me

To that 'appy land, Australyer !

For I buried Sam to-day at (Alleluyer !) 'arf-past three,
An', Bill, yer swore y'd marry me as soon as I was free ;
An' we're goin' to Australyer, for the General says, says
'e :

Go and raise the loud hosanna in a bright and cheerful
manner,

For the nation wants Salvation for to woman her and
man her,

And if you throw a sprat there you are bound to catch a
tanner

In that golden land, Australyer !

So, Bill, you put yer barrow down, an' come along o' me

To that lovely land, Australyer !

For I've only little Sam, an Jane, an' Dick, an' Emily,
An' without a man to 'ug me I'll be lonely on the sea,
An' the Adjertant will splice us, for the General says,
says 'e :

Go and wave the joyful banner in a warm, prolific manner,
For the country's populated chiefly by the iguana,
And the emu yearns for somebody to catch her and to can
her

In that golden land, Australyer !

So, Bill, you drop them winkles an' you come along o'
me

To that glorious land, Australyer !

For the steamer's ready waiting in the docks at Tilbury :
An' I'll love you when we get aboard—just wait a bit
an' see !

So 'urry 'ome an' pack yer traps ; for the General says,
says 'e :

Go and scatter gospel manna in the land of the banana,
For the pigweed and the prickly-pear and stinkwort and
lantana

Keep the kangaroo from bounding in his customary
manner

In that golden land, Australyer !

* * *

[INTERVAL OF 24 HOURS FOR MEDITATION ON THE FRAILTY OF
WOMAN AND EMIGRATION PROJECTS.]

* * *

I thought I'd never find yer, Bill ! an' things is up a tree
In that horful land, Australyer !

An', Bill, I couldn't help it—but Joe came a-worryin' me,
An' I've been an' gone an' married 'im this morning ; for
you see

'E's got a tidy milk-walk—an' the General says, says 'e :

Ho, the people in their blindness will not see the joyful
banner,

And they won't believe it's kindness when we shout the
loud hosanna :

There's no welcome for yer, William ; they don't want
yer, 'Appy 'Anner,

In that 'eathen land, Australyer !

NURSE JANE'S DISEASES.

To J.F.S.R.

The yarn I wish to spin to-day
 Concerns a City by a Bay—
 Or Harbour, if you say so :
 Where Love upset an Apple-Cart
 That would have pleased the kindly Heart
 Of P. Ovidius Naso.

Australia hears the Clarion call
 To Pills ! My City's Hospital
 Made every Caller keener ;
 And what is strange, about this time,
 It was no architectural Crime,
 But just a Misdemeanour.

This lordly Hospital was planned
 To help the Sick throughout the Land
 To Hygiene or Hearses :
 Its Doctors were a Corps d'Elite,
 Its Roman Matron owned the Street
 And five-and-sixty Nurses.

Napoleon's Soldiers, though in Rags,
 Had Marshals' Bâtons in their Bags ;
 And 'neath a Nurse's Bonnet
 You read the Text that rules her Life :
 " I too may be a Doctor's Wife ! "—
 The Darlings, how they con it !

But, as the Mischief had it here,
Ten Hero-Souls sans Hope or Fear
Prescribed or operated :
For one was " Such a lovely Duck ! "
That every Heart, with Darts bestuck,
To view him palpitated.

Now Nurses differ, as you know,
For some are built for Use, not Show ;
And Sixty-Four, though mostly
They guessed their Chances rather slight,
Were sure the Sixty-Fifth could sight
No Chance, however ghostly.

Her Name was JANE, plebeian JANE ;
Her Features matched it—O, so plain !
I fear her Teeth protruded ;
And then her Eyes turned several ways :
No Man in both at once could gaze
With Love, they all concluded.

Alas ! that Men prefer mere Looks
To solid Virtue (say a Cook's)
That seems a trifle coarse-faced :
This Problem always will perplex
The thinking Members of the Sex,
Especially the Horse-Faced.

Now, VENUS, aid me to suggest
Nurse AUDREY's Beauties—Lips confest
For boughs that Cherries grow on ;
And Cheeks ! and Eyes ! fit subjects these
For horticultural Similes ;
Et Cætera, and so on.

The five-and-sixty Nurses well
And oft debated who was Belle,
And gave the Palm to AUDREY :
Compared with her FELISE was mean,
And CLARA was a rustic Quean,
While JANE was simply tawdry.

But while they ogled, blushed, or sighed
And played the rôle " If I were Bride ! "
That maiden Fancy pleases,
JANE suddenly developed Charms
That threw the Prize into her Arms :
She got two strange Diseases !

In SIMON's Posture, RASCH's Sign,
Congenital in ADAM's Line,
Suggested Diagnosis ;
Yet how establish that, in face
Of all the Features of the Case,
Or prove Anastomosis ?

Doctors are Men, we may opine,
(That is, if they are masculine)
Not adamant to Beauty ;
Yet " the Profession " holds them fast,
And Love's a sweet Distraction cast
Across the path of Duty.

Our handsome Hero sundry Links
Had forged with furtive Nods and Winks
And surreptitious Squeezes :
He wavered : AUDREY might have won
Had JANE not crossed the Rubicon
With seven more Diseases !

What Doctor could resist the Chance ?
 He saw, he seized the True Romance
 That every Hero seizes :
 He brought the Parson to the Bed—
 His Friends declared, " He's wed ! He's dead !
 Of nine obscure Diseases."

THE END.

" The End " is not with Marriage sure,
 For JANE became a perfect Cure,
 And then her joy was shattered :
 As one by one she lost her Dower,
 Her fondest Glances in a Shower
 Of Love in vain were scattered.

THE SEQUEL !

The Doctor drew a horse in Tatt.'s,
 And soon eloped with AUDREY. That's
 The Sequel. I abhor it.
 " O, shocking ! " said the Nurses all,
 And then with Pleasure went to call
 And see " how dear JANE bore it."

THE MORAL ?

Long I have pondered this with Pain :
 Is it in AUDREY ? or in JANE ?
 Or in the Mob of Nurses ?
 When next you see one swooping slow
 Just ask her where her Morals grow,
 And mention, please, these Verses.

SPASMS.

?

*Know ye the land where red hats and red houses
 Are emblems of needs that are felt in their clime?
 Where beetroot with lobster insanely carouses
 To melt ye to moaning or madden to crime?*

!

O suburbs whose sins are as scarlet !
 O city encrimsoned with crimes !
 What vile and monotonous varlet
 Has fashioned the hats of your times ?
 How can you be soothed by the slumber
 That broods on a time-payment bed,
 Whose architects roof you with number-
 Less crude shades of red ?

!!

Seven colours the sages give rainbows,
 And their tints too are seventy times seven,
 Yet you would have damsels to gain beaux
 By one hue of all under heaven :
 Your sanguine outshining the sunset,
 Your carmine stained deeper than blood,
 Make incomprehensible onset :
 —I don't think they should.

!!!

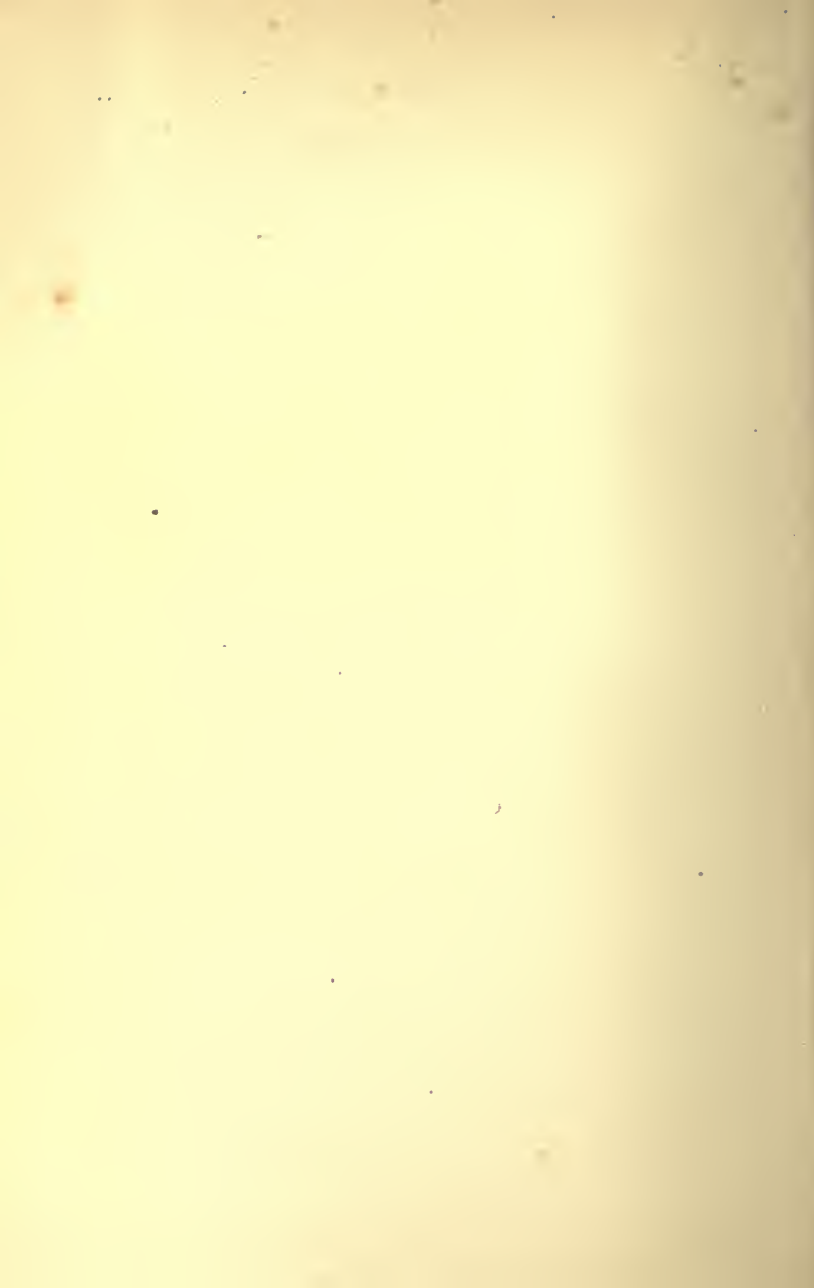
Aurora Australis, the maiden
Whose blush was so modest and meek,
With horror her headgear has laden
And ceased to be green (so to speak) ·
No milliner frightful affrays her,
She flames to th' incarnadined sky,
And angrily bids the rash gazer
Again wipe his eye.

!!!!

By tarantulas ruddy that bit you,
And crazed you, and left you for red ;
By tomatoes ripe, squashy, that smit you
And showered their pulp on your head ;
By the Woman of Scarlet, whose glories
Appear as a prevalent pest,
O tempora ! O astra ! O mores !

(*The Vernacular Lady :*

“ O give us a rest ! ”)



THE CROWN OF GUM-LEAVES

TO S.F.

The little iron-grey man stood at the door of his hostel, calmly eyeing the distance. He looked toward Alice Springs, and nothing was visible but the stony floor of the desert, shimmering under a sky of brilliant blue. Here and there a clump of ragged mulgas dotted the expanse ; the Mitchell-grass left by the rains had been scorched to dry roots. He moved inside to consider finally the preparations that She had ordered. In the larger room the massive table filled nearly the whole of the space. Around it, on three sides, chairs were ranged so closely that there was scarcely room to walk between them ; and at the head, on a dais raised slightly above the floor, stood a chair alone. In such a place, these chairs were remarkable ; for each was carved from a solid block of wood, and their grotesque ornamentation seemed to embody the oddest vagaries of aboriginal fancy. Except for the table and the chairs, the room was empty, and the stone walls were uncoloured and bare. The little man surveyed anew the disposition of the chairs, found nothing to alter, and returned to the door. It was not yet ten o'clock, and She had told him to prepare all for Her peculiar hour of noon. He filled his pipe and waited calmly.

A stranger—and all white men were strangers in that district in the heart of Australia—would have wondered

to see a stone house, solidly built, standing so far in the desert. It was away from all roads, and even away from the central telegraph line. No wheel-tracks were seen near it; no path led from it in any direction. Seemingly none but wandering aborigines could have taken advantage of its shelter. Yet there it stood under the fierce sun, in the unbroken silence; and a sign that seemed to mark it as a hostel swung from a projecting beam above the door. Upon one side of the sign was written, in red letters, the word

RIOT !

Upon the other side was written, in black letters, the word

REST.

Beneath the sign the little iron-grey man smoked calmly.

The second pipe was half-finished when his attentive eye perceived upon the eastern horizon a blurred patch that seemed to be detaching itself from the blurred clumps of distant mulga. He watched with calm interest: it was a year since he had seen a white face. The patch quickly defined itself and took shape as a figure on horse-back, that presently trotted up to the door and asked for Scotch whisky. The little iron-grey man surveyed the visitor calmly. He was a small, boyish fellow, with a good-natured expression—his face told nothing in particular beyond good-nature; and he rode an old grey horse that looked as if it had been hungry for several years.

"I suppose this is the place?" he asked, with a light smile.

The little iron-grey man took his pipe from his mouth. "This is the place."

"And what about the whisky?"

"There is nothing but mulga rum; you're welcome to that."

The visitor dismounted, and the gray horse immediately lay down and made noises suggestive of hunger. His rider patted him kindly, and followed the little iron-grey man inside to the smaller room, where a row of wooden vats stood behind a carved wooden counter. The little man filled a glass with a fluid that shone with the deep, intense blue of the sky without.

"And this is mulga rum?"

"Ay; distilled from the sap of the mulga."

The visitor tasted it. "Funny flavour?" he smiled.

"The best flavour," said the little iron-grey man.

The visitor drank, and presently asked for another glass. The little iron-grey man shook his head. "Better not!" he said, and went outside.

"Hold on! I haven't paid you."

The little iron-grey man took no notice. He was watching the arrival of two travellers on foot.

"Now we'll have an explanation of the mystery!" said the leader of the two, a shortish fellow with a freckled face framed in rusty-brown hair. "Are you the proprietor of this caravanserai? . . . Hullo! You here!" He shook hands with the first traveller without pausing in his question.

The little iron-grey man nodded.

"Then can you tell me why I and my friend here have suddenly felt an irresistible impulse to come to this outlandish place—why we simply had to come—couldn't keep our feet away from it?—and can you tell us, further, who paid our fares and smoothed away

the obstacles of the journey?—and can you tell us, finally, why we both had a premonition that we must bring a poem in our pockets?”

The little iron-grey man paused in re-filling his pipe. “You will know later,” he said, calmly.

“You haven’t sampled the rum yet!” said the first traveller, with his genial smile.

“Rum! Good God! where is it! Come along!” He hurried inside, followed by his mate, a tall, silent person with a long head and eyes of faded blue.

“Well, this is rum!” He held the glass admiringly to the light and sniffed the pervasive odour. He tasted it. “Rum! It is nectar—pure nectar! This is the drink that Ganymede gives to the Gods. And as we are the Gods, you”—he took off his hat and bowed magnificently to the little iron-grey man—“must be Ganymede!” He looked round triumphantly to mark the effect—drank—smacked his lips—and threw out commandingly the arm that held the glass. “Another glass, Ganymede!”

“But——” commenced the little iron-grey man, and checked himself, looking at his guest. He refilled the glasses. “It’s good, isn’t it,” said the tall man tentatively, resting himself loosely on the counter.

“Good!” The rusty-brown traveller flung out his arms with a gesture of sweeping disdain. “Good! Here is the best liquor in all the earth—in all the earth!—and a far better liquor than they have wit to concoct in Heaven—and this man says it’s good! Good! My God!” But seeing that there was no longer an audience (for the little iron-grey man had returned to the door), he dropped his voice and remarked meditatively, “I

wonder what we're here for ? There are more of them outside."

Indeed, travellers were now fast arriving. The first was a tallish, thinnish fellow on foot, with a sunken visage lighted by soft, dark eyes. He slouched up to the door with, " Well, chaps, I see you're all here ! "—and was immediately beckoned to the counter by the rusty-brown man, who had already taken charge of the gathering and was playing the part of host with practised ease.

The next came ambling up on a good horse. He was a muscular fellow, clean-shaven, with an anxious brow ; and he threw half-nods all round as he recognised the company. Followed him a stoutish young man with a florid complexion and a fine dome of skull. He padded leisurely to the door, looking enquiringly around, but with the self-conscious expression of one who is master of his fate and adept in any symbol under cover of which the Universe may hide. Then followed a tribe of others wearing various aspects—all of them (with exception of a lad of seventeen who walked with the air of meditative seventy) being in turn introduced to the sapphire mulga-essence behind the carved counter.

It was now nearly noon. The little iron-grey man cast a decisive glance at the sun, put his pipe in his pocket, closed the door, and calmly motioned the company into the larger room. No sooner were they seated than the reason of their presence seemed to become manifest simultaneously to them all.

" Oh, that's it, is it," said the anxious-browed horseman. " Then—— "

" Allow me ! " interposed the rusty-brown traveller,

rising in his seat with the importance of a master of ceremonies, and moving toward the unoccupied chair at the head of the table. The little iron-grey man, standing beside it, shook his head calmly. "Oh, very well—no matter—I can speak just as well where I am. Gentlemen!—We are met here, as I understand, at the invitation of the Genius of Australia"—he bowed graciously toward the empty chair—"to decide which of our number shall be hailed and acclaimed as Poet Laureate of this magnificent continent."

He paused. In the space upon the table directly in front of the vacant chair, there had become suddenly visible a wreath of gum-leaves. No one had placed it there; simply it manifested itself, like a Mahatma's letter arriving from unknown heights of space. All eyes turned to it; even the elderly lad of seventeen regarded it with mild curiosity. At the same moment there was a rustling of silken garments as if some person had occupied the chair at the head of the table; and all were conscious of a new Presence in the room—a Presence intensely vital, splendidly imperious, distinctly feminine. The little iron-grey man bent in an attitude of worship.

After a moment the speaker continued, in a lower voice: "We are here, gentlemen, I say, to decide which of our number shall be called—er—Laureate of Australia; and I doubt not that you have been impelled to bring—er—as I have, some—er—testimonial of your title to this high and honourable office. I gather that it is the wish of the—er—exalted Personage whom I now understand to be present"—he looked inquiringly at the Chair—"that these testimonials shall now be

read, and my own I will proceed to read to you. Possibly, when I have finished"—he gazed invitingly at the wreath of gum-leaves—"it may be thought—er—unnecessary to go any further." He looked round with an air of illumination, and continued: "It has this moment been made known to me, gentlemen, at the will of our gracious Hostess"—he bowed patronisingly to the Chair—"and, doubtless, to you also, that should my—er—that should any of our poor compositions seem to Her worthy, that wreath of gum-leaves which we see before us will of its own motion ascend to crown the brow of the Laureate Well then,"—he smoothed his hair—"ahem!"

AMARANTH.

The days rise up in argent pride,
The nights are steeped in purple dreams,
But not for me the radiant tide,
And not for me the poppied streams.

The cynic years have brought no calm;
No glory dazzles through the haze;
In vain I seek the ancient balm,
In vain the light of other days.

Then Youth flung largesse to the winds
That brought new gifts from every clime,
And perfect Love attuned our minds,
And Beauty consecrated Time.

And hand-in-hand we wandered through
A dim, delicious orchard-close,
Where many a lovely flower blew
In fragrance to out-vie the Rose,

Who flaunted splendour all around
As never since the world began,
Save in the enchanted Persian ground
Of sweet-voiced Saadi's Gulistan.

Yet when you stayed to pluck a flower
High-destined to a happier lot :
"Yon rose will not outlive the hour,
And even fades forget-me-not,"

You said ; " but when this day has flown,
That you may aye remember me
Through life, and death, and all, your own—
Take amaranth, and rosemary."

And in that shining Aidenn there
Our dreams made music all the day,
With viol, lute, and dulcimer
We watched them pass in brave array.

Then you were Queen of Phantasy,
And I was King of Fair Romance :
To us the courtiers bent the knee,
For us the minstrel and the dance.

Our throne was one great amethyst
Shapen and carved with cunning arts,
The footstools that our suppliants kissed
Were opals shot with fiery darts.

The arras of our presence-hall,
Woven by looms of far Cathay,
Bade Death and Life in worship fall—
So dark its shades, its hues so gay.

And pages, slashed and furbelowed,
Sported with scarlet shoulder-knots
Where musical, sweet waters flowed
From sculptured founts and hidden grots ;

And Love and Joy, with hurrying feet,
 Presided over all our hours,
Till came a gust of wintry sleet,
 And birds were mute, and drooped the flowers. . .

And now, alas ! in exile old,
 From that fond empire fallen low,
I mourn the days of rose-and-gold,
 The halcyon prime of long ago.

I know not where your spirit flies,
 In what dark realm for succour craves,
Or if in lost Atlantis sighs
 And wanders far beneath the waves,

Or if in some Hesperides
 Where blessed souls, divinely pure,
Beneath the golden-fruited trees
 Walk in a peace for ever sure ;—

But wheresoever you may be,
 I pray that God may give me grace
One day in far eternity
 To gaze a moment on your face.

Come then the torment and the pain !
 Come then the tempest of the soul !
I shall be bathed in bliss again
 Till Time shall wither like a scroll.

For sweet Adonis' festival
 The Greeks of old a garden grew,
Where lettuce twined with fennel tall,
 But never came a slip of rue ;

For when the short-lived feast was o'er
 The faded wreaths were thrown away,
And why remember, why deplore
 (They said) the joys of Yesterday ?

I, too, grew for the feast of Life
Within my heart a garden rare,
Where Love and Fame, in friendly strife,
And every pleasing flower had share.

The rose and regal hollyhock,
Blue lavender and lily, too,
I tended—and the Fates made mock,
For ah ! their roots were all in You.

I watched them one by one depart,
And of them all remains to me
This fadeless blossom of my heart,
The amaranth of Memory.

The rusty-brown traveller closed in a cadence of ecstasy, with an expectant eye on the wreath of gum-leaves. There was a little sigh from the Chair, followed by a movement of impatience, and the wreath did not move. "Oh, very well, then——!" He sat down noisily, and scowled as he pushed his manuscript about on the table. The little iron-grey attendant nodded to the wiry horseman, who commenced rather nervously :—

THE HONOUR OF THE DISTRICT.

He was a noble Englishman—a-travelling round the earth
To cure a growing tendency to gout—
Or so he said ; and ten portmanteaux guaranteed his birth,
But the Cooma District couldn't make him out.
For he turned up at Kiandra, when the carnival was on,
And he won the champion snowshoe-race with ease ;
The local heroes hung their heads and said, when he had gone,
'Twas plain the gout had never reached his knees !
His name was something-Cholmondeley ; he was very wide-
awake ;
And all the girls admired his Alpine hat ;—
But, you see, it was the honour of the district was at stake,
And they couldn't let him travel off with that.

He was heard of next at Jindabyne, duck-shooting in the spring.

And he killed his birds without a single miss ;

And the veteran Jinda sportsmen, who " preferred a lively wing,"

Opened eyes and muttered, " What the gout is this ? "

He was ask d to Adaminaby, to see some shearing done

(He grew fonder of the district every day),

And the boys all looked delighted when he said that, just for fun

He would shear a few to drive the gout away.

So they chose a heavy wether, with a real mountain fleece,

And they showed him how he ought to hold the shears

(The points away) and how to pluck the wool (like plucking geese),—

And they stood around prepared with cheerful jeers.

But the stranger gripped the wether like a workman with his knees,

And his stroke was swift and clean—a ringer's clip ;

He had finished that big wether in five minutes, if you please !

And had pinked as if the boss was at his hip.

He said he felt that nothing helped like shearing for the gout,

And he kept the pickers going all the day ;

The ringer had shorn eighty-five, when Cholmondeley, with a shout

Marked " Ninety ! "—(and the bell rang)—" Wool away ! "

But he said, of course with practice he would really get up speed :

The thing was to make sheep obey your eye ;

In love, and war, and sport, and work, an Englishman could lead

If he only once made up his mind to try.

But the boys were very sulky, for they hadn't a reply,

And they put their heads together what to do,

When suddenly Wild Donegan jumps up and slaps his thigh :

" By Hokey ! lads, we'll see the beggar through !

We'll have a little steeplechase, a sweet three mile or so,

And set the course down Nungar mountain side ;

We'll make a jolly day of it, and ask the girls below,

And we'll string my noble Johnny on to ride ! "

A deputation went at once to state the little plan,

And the Englishman was willing—for, of course,

Though he wasn't any horseman, be believed that any man

With good English blood could sit upon a horse.

The day came round, and such a crowd was never seen before,—
From every station round, from every town,
From Tumut, Gilmore, Adelong, they rallied by the score
To see the noble Englishman put down.
They gave him a young brumby that was only ridden twice,
But he managed to stick on through all the chaff ;
And then the starter called them, and they cantered in a trice,
While the girls picked places ready for the laugh.
The start was up among the clouds that hid the mountain top,
And the riders all seemed dropping on your head ;
You'd think that once they tumbled they would surely never stop
Till they landed in the rocky streamlet-bed.

They came down helter-skelter, and the stones flew in their wake '
And they risked their necks, quite careless of a fall,
For they knew the tarnished honour of the district was at stake—
But the Englishman rode straightest of them all !
He brought his mount in lengths ahead, a-tremble and a-foam ;
When the others straggled after in a tail,
He was talking to the girls about the hunting leaps " at home "—
Forty feet of ditch beyond a nine-foot rail !
He feared he had done badly—since he saw they looked askance,
But he wished he had his Shetland pony there
He had ridden when a youngster—that he might have had a
chance
To show the girls what Englishmen could dare !

And the boys of Adaminaby, with faces long and glum,
Loosed bridles and rode silently away :
They felt too sick for cursing, but they wished in Kingdom Come
The Johnny who had beaten them that day.
But jolly Annie Laurie was with indignation full,
And she gathered all the girls together there :
Says she, " The boys have failed to get this Johnny by the wool,
So we girls will try and catch him by the hair.
He put them down quite easily—no wonder that they frown !—
But the honour of the district is at stake ;
And there's one thing, girls, I wager that he never will put down—
And that's a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake ! "

Now, the Tumut cake is famous over all the country-side,
For the recipe is never known to fail :
Twas invented by a bushranger to welcome home his bride,
And they hanged him for the crime in Wagga gaol.
It is tougher than the hair-ball that you find inside a cow,
And the currants break your teeth off when you bite :
There was no one ever heard of who could eat a slice, they vow,
And a single crumb will turn a stranger white.
So they set to work and made it, and they mixed it double
strength,
For the treacle using glue, to take no chance ;
They baked it for a week or more, and when 'twas done at length
They invited all the district to a dance.

The noble Englishman came first ; his dancing was renowned ;
He put all the local steppers in the shade ;
And he held the girls so deftly that they never touched the
ground,
But flew like birds—no matter what they weighed.
So they felt a little sorry when the supper-bell rang out,
And even Annie's voice commenced to shake
When she said, " Oh, Mister Cholmondeley, you are hungry now,
no doubt,
Won't you try a slice of Tumut Christmas-cake ! "
But he simply said " With pleasure ! " Lord ! that man had
pluck in stacks !
And she passed him a great slice upon a plate
(They'd chopped at it for half-an-hour, until they broke the axe)
And all the people gathered round to wait.

They saw it was the real thing, as black as night inside,
With a tricky sugar icing, pink and white ;
And strong men gasped and shuddered, and the women nearly
cried,
As the Englishman prepared to take a bite.
He took it, and it held his jaws as firmly as a vice ;
But the courage of the dogged British race
Rose within him, and he stiffened all his muscles to the slice,
And he ate it without stirring from his place !
But hardly had he finished when he gave a fearful yell,
And leapt in air eleven feet or more ;

He writhed, and squirmed, and fought, and tore, and wriggled
where he fell,
And his horrid groaning noises shook the floor.

They almost felt remorseful as they watched the wreck he made,
So they lifted him and put him in a bed ;
And all the girls stood round him with their handkerchiefs displayed,

And when the spasms had left him, thus he said :
" Here die I an Englishman, who loved his country well,
And my enemies I honestly forgive ;
But there's no man born of woman, and no devil out of hell,
Who could eat a slice of Tumut cake and live ! "
So he died, as was expected, and the people all agreed
It was right the district honour so to save ;
And his funeral was elegant as any man could need,
And three parsons were discoursing at his grave.

And the boys all threw a clod upon the coffin—just for luck,
And the girls sowed weeping willows for his sake ;
Though bonnie Annie Laurie lost her pride and lost her pluck,
And cried at home as if her heart would break.
They got a Sydney tombstone up, with all his names in full
(There were nine beside the Cholmondeley)—and a text ;
For they knew a noble Englishman is pure merino wool,
And they didn't want his mother to be vexed.
So the job was neatly finished ; every man his shilling gave,
For the honour of the district was at stake ;
And they tell the stranger proudly : " He was bravest of the
brave ;
But we put him down—with Tumut Christmas-cake ! "

There was a sound from the Chair as of a half-suppressed laugh—a laugh deliciously toned ; but the wreath did not move. The tall, fair traveller, who several times had half-risen from his seat, seized the occasion, and chanted these lines in a voice that seemed to roll from dark caverns of memory.

THE SOUTHERLY.

The City lay a-swelter in the heat
That tarnished all her flowery diadem,
And quieted her clamorous wheels of Trade,
Till even lovers moved on lagging feet,
And, drooping like sad lilies on the stem,
The little children hushed their play, and sought the blessed
shade.

A watcher on the City's tallest spire
Saw through the pallid haze that seemed a shroud
The ghastly human hive, and heard below
Strange sounds come piercing through the mantle dire—
A stricken man that raved and shrieked aloud,
A girl's hysteric laugh, a tortured infant's wail of woe.

The watcher turned him where the brooding South,
Urging her black battalions, closer crept,
Threatening like some great dragon of the skies,
Till sudden through the streets that parched with drought
There came a Wind, a Lion-Wind that leapt,
Roaring, and clutched the City's throat, and fiercely took her
prize.

And he who cast the stormy horoscope
Beheld the veil dissolve in gusty waves,
And hearkened to the Whirlwind Voice that pealed
" Arise ! I bring you peace and living hope,
Balm for the sick, and rest that labour craves,
And cool sea-blessings ; rise a queen, and be for beauty healed ! "

Then She that lay beneath the shroud awoke,
With every icy breath renewing life,
And through her streets with luring eyes ashine
The maidens passed, while happy laughter broke
From litten windows, and old Joy was rife,
And men praised God for love and strength, fair women and red
wine.

He delivered the last line with impressive unction ; but the gum-leaves only shivered slightly, as if a breeze had passed over them. The little iron-grey man nodded to the first-comer, who rose with an apologetic smile.

" I'm afraid mine isn't of very much account," he said ; " but of course I don't take myself very seriously, and I'd never dream of expecting any such honour as that which is proposed for one of the others, who I'm sure are all very much better than I am." This modesty being greeted with encouraging cries of " Go on !"—and a marked wave of sympathy proceeding from the Chair—the speaker was emboldened to read the following :—

BEAUTY'S A-FLOWER !

The sun goes down in glory,
The long day's toil is done :
'T is time to tell the story
That waits for set of sun.
Gray Ronald whinnies waiting ;
The good horse knows his task ;
For Night's the time for mating,
And Love has but to ask.

So mount in haste, fond lover !
And o'er the plain away ;
There's fifteen miles to cover,
And back by break of day.
Through cabbage-gums a-blossom
In Springtide's lavish dower :
With million-creaming bosom
The grey Bush is a-flower !

Then up the rocky ridges,
Along the silent creek
Where spiders build their bridges
And ghostly curlews shriek ;
Till, swift as Love's own shallop,
We skirt the timber dead
And settle for the gallop—
The fence a mile ahead.

What fence would stop a lover
With Beauty waiting there !
So off . . . and up . . . and over !
With half-a-yard to spare.
Was ever good horse bolder !
What reck though Fortune lower ;
The foam-buds gem his shoulder—
Gray Ronald is a-flower !

A mile, and then I wander
The garden path I know :
See ! in her window yonder
The trysting light burns low.
Hush, voice ! what need of token ?
Hush, heart ! her pledge is true :
Such faith was never broken ;
She's yours, and all for you. . .

A footstep patters lightly,
A face upturns to mine,
A snowdrift breast heaves whitely
And misty blue eyes shine :
O, Love it is Life's noon-light
And this Love's day and hour—
Her lips meet mine in moonlight,
And Beauty is a-flower !

"You're out of it!" cheerfully remarked the rusty-brown traveller, who had recovered his natural good-humour. "Who's next?"

"I believe I am next," said the traveller with the Jovian brow, rising rather ponderously.

"Excuse me!" said another who had listened hitherto with some air of discontent, while moving uneasily on his chair.

"Oh, certainly!" chuckled his rival, and plumped down again.

The impatient poet cleared his throat and began :

IN THE DAYS WHEN THE BEER WAS STRONG.

The earth goes round with a weary sob, and our lives are sad and pale,

And half of the heroes are out of a job, and half by the heels in jail ;

The same old crank with the same old kink we meet in the same dull throng—

And a bloke can't drink as he used to drink in the days when the beer was strong.

When the North brewed liquor that stung like Death, and the East and the West did too,

And the Golden Beer of Elizabeth brought the Golden Age anew ;
When Spain was thrashed by a malt-bred horde that conquered the French in song,

And all the world was drunk as a lord in the days when the beer was strong.

'Twas honest stingo and honest food—in the days of the Lovely Thirst—

When men were coopers and casks were good—and yet they were forced to burst.

The blokes would follow you like a lamb if you shouted for aides-de-camp—

Ah, Beer was a noble oriflamme in the days when the beer was strong !

They tried to drink as a free man should—they were happier men
than we,

With ale that hummed for years in the wood and never begat
D.T.

'Twas a tankard big as a bucket then, and swigging in turn, ding-
dong,

And they held their breath till they bottomed like men in the
days when the beer was strong.

We drink like women, and feed as such—the coats of our stomachs
we guard—

Where scarcely the rum o.p. could touch, the spawn of a pump
bites hard ;

Though tea and the cowardly cocoa-nib the life of the cur prolong,
Men pledged each other and told no fib in the days when the beer
was strong.

Think of it all—of the liquor you miss ! Study the dregs in your
glass !

Study the past ! And answer this : IS BEER AS GOOD AS IT WAS ?
The coal-tar slop and the strychnine hop have done us a crimson
wrong :

No matter who fell it were better to drop as they did when the
beer was strong.

With its dull, brown taste of a threepenny bar the dreary beer
goes down :

Is this the result of the Maori war ?—is this Australia's crown ?

Is this the sequel of Southward Ho ? of the New-Chum's cheerful
song ?

The heart of the rebel makes answer " No ! We'll fight till the
beer grows strong ! "

Our beer shall yet be a better beer—for the State shall start to
brew,

With lashings of malt, and hops not queer, and white-grown
sugar too.

The road to Freedom is round by the Vat ! Hurry and come
along !

Sons of the Drinkers ! Vote for that ! Vote till the beer grows
strong !

Before the last line had ceased to sound, the ponderous bard was on his feet and ready.

"You might give it time," snapped the rusty-brown traveller, with his eyes on the wreath.

"Oh, by all means," replied the other with a benevolent smile, "but it seemed to me there was question of giving it eternity."

"To understand your piece, I presume?" sweetly retorted the objector.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! This is not seemly," interposed the little iron-grey man; and order being restored, the dignified traveller regarded the assembly blandly, fingered his manuscript, and proceeded.

"The piece that I am now about to read to you, Madam"—he addressed the Chair with formality—"may be considered somewhat difficult of apprehension; but that is a quality which it shares in common with everything that represents the triumph of refined taste as opposed to that of the gross herd—'la multitude vile,' as Baudelaire fitly describes them. I admit, however, that it is not designed to be ingested in the process of oral recitation. I purpose, therefore, adding some slight gloss or commentary that may aid in the explication of the theme. I may add," he continued, letting his glance fall with severity upon the rusty-brown traveller, who had snorted audibly, "that as my poem is divided into eighteen sections, each section containing six stanzas, I shall be grateful for complete silence"—he paused for emphasis—"during the delivery. To commence, then. The title of the piece is

" Perhaps I should explain that a title is really an excrescence ; since a poem, like a poet, is born in a perfect shape, without any tag or label whatever. Still, I have decided to give titles for the present (without extra charge) as a concession to the ignorance of the populace. Without further preface, then :

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

" I may say that I believe a poet may be fitly likened to a spider, and my own internal store seems to me to yield an endless thread of verse. My first section has been drawn through a Mexican cigar, but I can just as readily draw through ice. The symbol will be found equally as glutinous in the one case as in the other. Resuming, therefore :

THE SOUL OF THE SEER.

" It occurs to me that, with this introductory piece, I should explain my method. I write poems that are to all appearance intelligent, if not intelligible, and I spread an obvious significance in decorative language, much as a peacock spreads his tail. But behind this exoteric meaning I shall conceal an esoteric meaning which adepts will discover, and which is the real justification of the poem. The common mob will see me, as it were, fishing for trout in a peculiar river (to use a Shakespearean symbol literally), but the elect will recognise that I am catching the Secret of Life in the abyss of the Universe. It will always be open to discussion how much of the Secret I catch, since each of my pupils, even among the elect, will receive only that portion of my message which he is fitted to receive. But this remainder of doubt is a consequence of the

inadequate means of expression supplied by language, and is not necessarily to be deprecated. Qua Symbolic Poet, I find that I can labour most conveniently as a Veiled Mokanna, after the fashion of that Hakem ben Haschem of whom we read in d'Herbelot's account contributed to *La Bibliothèque Orientale*; for the reason that, if I be at times obscure, we shall have a preliminary presumption that the fault lies with minds too gross to pierce my lustrous mystery. I shall endeavour, when possible, to begin with an easy line, thus :

the matin stroke inaudible expireS

“ I regret that I cannot vocally represent the effect that I attain by transferring to the end of the line of verse the capital letter printed usually at the beginning : this being one of the personal arrangements by which I desire to be distinguished. Since, however, I have entered upon an explanation, I may as well add that my first section represents apparently the attitude and emotions of a man who stands under a shower-bath and soaps himself all over before he discovers that the water has been turned off. This symbolises to me the dream of an idealist who has swathed his life in aspirations toward the divine purity of Heaven, and who awakens in the grave to the sensation of worms crawling upon him and the realisation that he is beginning a career in Purgatory. In this way I leap from the individual to the general, according to the accepted doctrine of Art, leaving to my disciples (when I gain them) the duty of withdrawing each the symbol particular to himself. To commence, therefore :

the matin stroke inaudible expireS
 winging to caverns murk'd of silent sound :
 steals sinister the cohort of desireS
 Where prison'd in voluptuous profound

slumbrous obscurities (O whither flY,
 ye shapes august !) I vision'd overturN
 yawning the daisied coverlet awrY
 till victor in the aeon-strife I burN

with vast resolve jetted from starry heightS

He paused. " You have of course perceived, Madam, that I am working on two planes or platforms at once. On the lower platform I have set-off the alarm clock in the same phrase by which (on the higher platform) I have blown Gabriel's trump. My obvious subject has turned over in bed in a line that contains plain hints of Resurrection morning. I may be pardoned for asking attention to more subtle touches—especially to those which you cannot see.—My next verse is more difficult : it is unwise to make the Symbolic path too easy, for the egotism of disciples who have overcome all obstacles is apt to lead them to fancy themselves as great as the Master—a contingency carefully to be avoided. Continuing :—

with vast resolve jetted from starry heightS
 whose white magnificence derides the duN
 inchoate melancholy anchoriteS
 brood in Diogenes' dark malisoN

" Perhaps I should hint (on the lower platform) that Diogenes lived in an empty tub ; but I deem it unjust to this audience to interpret further : in tuas manus, Domina !

from labyrinthine chrysalis the cluE
 spars alabaster writhing in reversE
 of cold lustration : saponaceous gluE
 adheres that choral heaven can abstersE.

“ I admit that this verse is not up to my Symbolic level : it is too simple : the next verse atones. It is my object to show you, not poetry in the making, but Poetry in the matrix, purged of grosser particles.

but sudden twining anguished tentacleS
 seize loath despairing sinuositY :
 drouth-banished, dephlegmated pinnacleS
 stand starkly-arefied monstrositY.

the mast's firm, delicate assault to skieS
 ah, shipwreck-shattered ! fails not more than hE
 whose shivering soul resigns the high emprisE,
 shrouded a-squirm in crackling agonY.

“ Here ends the first section of my poem, and I doubt not you will agree with me that it is worthy to be called sublime. The more you study it, the more you will see in it : it will take you many years to understand it fully, and then you will not be certain that you understand it in the least. My second section is symbolically somewhat more complex. I here develop an idea formulated by the Master—I need scarcely say that I allude to N. S. Stéphane Mallarmé. Thus I commence :

O Blue ! O Blue ! O Blue ! O Blue ! O BluE !——

He paused. All eyes, and ears, were turned to the Chair. Yes, there it came again—a sound scarcely breathed, softly modulated ; yet a snore, a distinct, unmistakable Snore !

A hot-tempered poet rose, stuttering : " B-b-but this is m-m-monstrous ! I haven't read m-m-mine yet ! "

" Nor I ! " " Nor me ! " " We haven't read ours ! " cried fourteen poets in chorus.

Everybody rose and gesticulated with the exception of the traveller whose reading had been interrupted. He seated himself with the expression of Eugene Aram in the condemned cell, and gazed into Space. The hubbub grew around him. The rusty-brown traveller, vociferating, " Listen to me ! " was powerless to quell the tumult. The little iron-grey man appeared perplexed, but calm.

Suddenly there was silence. As mysteriously as She had come, they felt the Presence vanish. For a moment they were awed. Then a poet rose to his opportunity. " I have not yet read mine," he explained ; " but mine is undoubtedly the best. Therefore—— " And he stretched over the table and grasped the wreath of gum-leaves.

That is, he grasped the space where the wreath had been. For, even as he touched it, it disappeared beneath his fingers : seemingly it had melted into air. There remained—a single leaf.

Instantly the poets nearer to the leaf threw themselves upon it. Those farther from the leaf threw themselves upon the poets. There was combat and a scuffle. Loud voices affirmed superiority ; louder voices denied. Several poets on the outskirts of the struggling mass commenced to read their pieces to each other. Then the little iron-grey man perceived it was time to act.

Upon his hint several left the room. The others he collared and took in turn to the door, kicking them forth

calmly, but not unskilfully. When all were out, he closed the door.

No sooner had a poet reached the open air than he tottered and fell, and slept instantly where he fell. Not one who had partaken of the mulga rum escaped its potent stupor. The youthful antique alone remained erect, gazing pensively at the prone forms that strewn the earth around him. While light remained, he busied himself in inditing a poem descriptive of the scene. When the light failed, he chose the plump and dignified traveller for a pillow, and slept deliberatively. Above him, in the newly-risen breeze of evening, the sign of the hostel creaked backward and forward between its legends of RIOT and REST—RIOT, and REST. And the vast wings of Night drooped over all.

When the travellers woke at daylight, dishevelled but buoyant, they stared round in surprise. They lay, or sat, or stood, among the stones of the desert. The hostel had vanished. The more curious searched for its site, but found no trace that a building had stood where they remembered it. Then—was Yesterday a dream? No; for an ambient odour of mulga rum still remained like a blessing upon the spot. "The rum at least was real," muttered the rusty-brown traveller regretfully.

It was fortunate that some of them had sandwiches in their pockets; and they remembered having passed a waterhole not far away. Gradually they made their way back to civilisation. Nobody yet wears the crown of gum-leaves.

But the leaf remains in the possession of the poet with the best right to it.

THE HONEYMOON TRAIN.

(From Sydney to Katoomba. Seen prophetically.)

Hark how the chill westerly rattles the windows !
I'll draw up my chair to the side of the fire :
That new book, I fancy, must wait till to-morrow—
I'm lazy, and old eyes so easily tire.

By George ! good cigar, this ! Nell chose it and lit it,
And thrust me in here till she clears things away.
A nice little dinner she gave me this evening—
Soup, fish, pâté, salad and cheese—all O.K.

Dear Nellie ! Heigho, as I stare at the embers,
The years roll away down their dusty old track :
I mind well the first time I saw her—at Harry's—
Her father was dead : she was still wearing black,

All black, with an old-fashioned brooch made of silver,
And châtelaine of silver, and quaint silver belt :
She looked—how she looked ! . . . there, that coal in the
centre !

That's she ! . . . ah, the picture's beginning to melt.

In three months we married—let's see—eighteen-ninety :
Just forty years gone—how the time slips away !
The thirteenth—no was it ?—the fifteenth—yes,
fifteenth :
Why, hang it ! we're forty years married to-day !

Ah ! now je comprends—all those little side-glances :
Her colour, her chatter, the dress that she wore !
The wine, this cigar ! why, I smelt something extra—
Old duffer I was not to see it before !

All years ago ? Nonsense ! it happened this morning—
The wedding, the breakfast, the table all set
And people all glaring—O Lord ! they encored me !
A dream ! no, I feel the rice down my back yet.

And then comes a mist, but I know at the station
I wrung the guard's hand : did he think me insane ?
Then handkerchiefs waving—" Good-bye and God bless
you ! "

A whistle ! we're off by the honeymoon train !

That journey ! O, Paradise holds nothing sweeter !
(What bliss can be bought for a twelve-shilling fare !)
With Nell on my knee (she got off at the stations)
Pretending to scold when I let down her hair.

And now we've arrived, and had welcome and dinner,
And Nell for a moment has gone to our room—
Our room ! Just to think it ! and that is her footstep :
We'll sit—not too long—and spend love in the gloom.

" Cigar out ! No gas lit ! My dear, I've been dozing ! . .
How well you look, Nellie ! your eyes shine again.
What, kisses ! Hang grey hairs ! I'm gay three-and-
twenty—

God bless us ! we're off by the honeymoon train ! "

"A BUSH STORY."

Upon this first-rate poem look
In good Hume Nisbet's latest book—
Reminding us of Captain Reece,
Commander of the "Mantelpiece."

THE POEM.—I.

There is no land which has not been
Of dark or noble acts the scene.
The difficulty is to save
Their records from oblivion's grave.

Our saviour thus begins his song
At London published by John Long :
Now turn the page to Two-Five-Three
And watch a foiled oblivion flee !

IV.

One night my wife and I were woke
By yells which through the thick scrub broke.
We both jumped up—quick dressed, then saw
A sight which filled our hearts with awe.

(Please wait in awe while we explain
That space is precious, to our pain :
If all they saw you wish to see
Remember kindly—Two-Five-Three !)

VI.

And gathered here beneath the ray
Two hostile tribes in savage fray,
With boomerang, and bow, and spear,
War striped, and howls of rage or fear.

Although in unfamiliar guise
The "boomerang" we recognise;
"War striped" is excellent—but no!
We do not recognise the "bow."

XIII.

Slowly they dragged themselves along
The clotted clay, no longer strong,
As when they came up lithe as cats
In darkness, or rapacious bats.

"Rapacious bats!" —the phrase is prime:
We thank thee, Phœbus! for that rhyme.
O happy blacks and bats, to be
Embalmed in such a simile!

XVI.

And, turning, saw a girl appear
All naked, flying like a deer
Loud panting, while upon her track
Appeared a stalwart, painted black.

But ha! "I sprang, and with a blow
Soon brought the cruel savage low!"
(Corroborative details strive
For precedence at Two-Five-Five.)

XXI.

I left her with my buxom Nan,
Who with her tender tact began
To clothe and question her dark guest
Why she had been so closely prest ?

Be good enough at " clothe " to pause,
For clothes inspire the Saxon's laws,
Adorn the moral of the Gael—
And here, as well, they point the tale.

XXX.

At last one day our little child
Had strayed into the bush-track wild,
When we in wildest doubt set out
With a black friendly tracker tout.

We heard a nocent waterspout
With a black friendly tracker tout
Discuss where S 's sting could be
And where was P 's victory.

XXXI.

All day we tracked her steps, we passed
O'er many a mile until at last
We found her underneath a tree
With something red upon her knee.

The shining red her childish eye
Attracted till the tout came by :
'Tis thus a good deed shines, we know,
Within this naughty world of woe.

XXXII.

A flannel rag the child had found
Near where she sat, and on the ground
A scarlet flannel shawl lay there
Upon a skeleton picked bare.

You see the point ? The grateful black
Had died to save her benefac-
Tor's child, and so, with cheerful groans,
Had hung her banner on her bones.

XXXIV.

Who had it been, we could not tell,
But this I do remember well,
That when we parted with the black
A shawl like this was on her back.

O, Mister Nisbet ! we implore
Immortalise us thus no more ;
Our records do not try to save,
But give us back oblivion's grave !

THE LADIES' GALLERY.

House of Representatives, Wellington, N.Z.

The ladies in the gallery
Have come to pass the time,
And some have feathers in their hats
And some have frocks sublime :
They bring their fancy-work along
And furiously sew,
Or nurse a speculative chin
And scan the men below.

The funny creatures talk away,
Implore, and rave, and fuss :
The ladies by their actions say
" It doesn't bother us."
But when a harsher, louder voice
Disturbs their torpor bland,
They focus inattentive eyes
And try to understand.

The Voice descants on sheep who bear
A heavy fleece—and so
The ladies gaze at all the heads
Whose wool will never grow :
They ponder baldness unashamed,
And side-locks brushed across,
And pity poor, deluded polls
That cannot hide their loss.

Debaters in their turn rise up,
And dinners settle down ;
The ladies work away, and chat
Of things they saw in town :

Whatever happens to the land
The children must have socks,
And crewel-work is wanted in
The Tangitaki blocks.

The member for Whakarepu
Has found a clause he loathes :
He says a leasehold cannot thrive,
It never will wash clothes ;
But the ladies in the gallery
Are not a bit impressed—
“ Knit four, purl two, slip one, repeat.”
And finish baby's vest.

The member for Pirikipi
Is thoroughly convinced
That greedy freeholders should all
Be pounded up and minced ;
But his wife up in the gallery
Will scarcely raise her head :
She thinks, “ Poor Tom ! how tired he is !
He ought to be in bed.”

The evening slowly wears along,
The clock-hands slowly turn,
And half-past nine is round at last—
“ The House will now adjourn.”
The ladies in the gallery
Know supper-time has come :
They shake up their fal-lallery
And peacefully go home.

HARD LINES.

Observe that in the crowd which you
Walk indistinguishably through,
The deeds are done by five or six—
The others merely also do.

A few are heard of near and far ;
Their health is drunk in every bar ;
And while the other fellows drink,
You also drink—and there you are !

Whenever Carbine made a man
Attempt to dance the gay can-can
And jump upon his hat—'tis clear
That other horses also ran.

And while your Meredith you quote
Or else for Dickens give your vote
How rarely do you pause to think
That Jones and Simpson also wrote.

They did, you know, and rather well,
But Fame omits their praise to tell :
She spends her time on Thackeray—
Ah, Thackeray ! he was a Swell.

And so it is with other folk :
For Andrew Fisher's not a joke,
The papers print his speech in full,
But—" Mr. * * * also spoke."

How sad it is ! how tragic ! when
You see these low, inferior men
Get undeserved A.D.V.T.—
And you ! not one applauding pen.

They say that things on earth awry
Will straighten out beyond the sky,
And what we know as margarine
Will rank as butter by-and-by.

I hope so. For, with what a pang,
When all the heavenly welkin rang,
We should receive the dreadful news
That you and I, friend, “ also sang.”

TO THE EDITOR.

Is the weather getting wetter ? Write a letter ! Write a letter !

Is the state of Egypt better ? Write a letter !

Do you smell the city drains ? Is Siberia in chains ?

Does your stomach give you pains ? Write a letter !

Have you found a new religion or a bargain at the draper's ?

Write a letter ! Write a letter ! Write a letter to the papers.

Are you troubled by a debtor ? Write a letter ! Write a letter !

Do you know a cure for tetter ? Write a letter !

When the summer wind begins do you feel it in your shins ?

Do you know the loss of pins ? Write a letter !

When your dog has got distemper or your wife has got the vapours,

Write a letter ! Write a letter ! Write a letter to the papers !

Have you met a wicked sweater ? Write a letter ! Write a letter !

Did your hen thrive when you set her ? Write a letter !

Have you views about the trams ? Think the politicians shams ?

Know the pedigree of yams ? Write a letter !

When a comet is careering or a cow is up to capers,

Write a letter ! Write a letter ! Write a letter to the papers !

MOLLIE MCGINNIS MCGUIRE.

"The 'Launceston Waltz,' by Mollie McGinnis McGuire, will shortly be published."

Mollie McGinnis McGuire !

Boy, bring me my wreath and my lyre !

For my soul leaps to flame at the sound of her name,
And there's no knowing what may transpire,

O, Mollie McGinnis McGuire !

Your syllables chime and conspire

To capture the ear of a critical seer

With a motto of "Something Admire !"

For the trochee pauses humming to prepare us for the
coming

Heroic of amphibrach, trumpeting, drumming

"A way for Lord Iamb !"

Who will find you, I'm certain, no foe to sweet folly,

O Mollie ?

O, Mollie McGinnis McGuire !

You're a trio con brio—a choir

Of angels who'd wheedle a man or a beadle
To love you and yearn and aspire.

And whatever your new waltz may be

With its one-and-a-two-and-a-three,

My heart will beat true to the three names of you,

And I'll be your own Dinnis,

O Mollie McGinnis !

O, Mollie McGinnis McGuire !
Had you blessed a less suitable sire—
 Some Daley or Durfey,
 Or Mooney or Murphy—
How much there would be to desire !
But in perfect attire you deprecate ire ; and despite the
 doom dire of the never-quenched fire you will hear
 from the pyre a whisper expire at your feet, saying
 “ Wire,
If you please, Miss McGuire,
From the beautiful shore just three words and no more :
—Mollie—McGinnis—McGuire ! ”

Boy, hang up my wreath and my lyre !
I've run short of the rhymes I require ;
But I'll say her name over in tones of a lover—

MY MOLLIE

McGINNIS

McGUIRE !

THE GAME.

Boys and girls, come out to play.

Shake your skeletons ! Shake your skeletons !
Life's a hazard all must pay.

Rattle your bones !
Watch the chances turning daily,
Lost ? Keep on ! Why look so palely !
Throw your main and throw it gaily—

Shake your skeletons ! Rattle your bones !

Up ! Play up ! and damn dismay.

Shake your skeletons !
Lost again ! Who's next ? Hooray !
Rattle your bones ! Rattle your bones !
Never steep too long in sorrow ;
Clouds to-day mean sun to-morrow ;
Trouble's not a thing to borrow—

Shake your skeletons ! Rattle your bones !

Here's a girl and a wedding day—

Shake your skeletons ! Shake your skeletons !
Here's a horse and a gallant fray—

Rattle your bones !
Though your roof be but a hovel,
Empty purse is nothing novel,
Up ! Live up ! and scorn to grovel—

Shake your skeletons ! Rattle your bones !

Time and tide can never stay—

Shake your skeletons ! Shake your skeletons !

Fortune's here or far away—

Rattle your bones ! Rattle your bones !

Hang your grumbling ! Be a grinner . . .

What ! all done ? And Death's the winner !

One last fling, then, saint or sinner—

Shake your coffins ! Rattle your bones !

JARRAHLAND JINGLES.

To E. G. M.

Life—beer—and ants. The bard descants
 Over the golden West ;
 His speech is free, his ecstasy
 Untrammelled by a vest ;
 The life appears a glorious brew,
 The beer, it seems, is glorious too ;
 But, W.A., A.W.,
 Those ants.

Ants—life—and beer. We suffer here
 An East grown pale, effete ;
 For puny men in city pen
 No vivid pulses beat.
 Life West is full of derring-do,
 The western ants are full of you ;
 But, W.A., A.W.,
 That beer ?

Beer—ants—and life. One hour of strife
 Is worth the years we drone ;
 Find, if you wish, gold in the dish
 Of verses, here dry-blown.
 Out West the beer is called “ shypoo,”
 The ants are called by pet names blue,
 But, W.A., A.W.,
 That life !

CITO PEDE . . .

I really ought to do some work to-night,
I really ought : I fear I'm growing lazy—
Or old maybe. Old ! I ! Surely Time's spite
Stops short at Spain ? My castles are not crazy,
My dreams are bright—I never had ambitions :
Yet . . . I bethink me Winnie's wicked eye
Saw a gray hair to-day : gray hairs have missions . . .
Well, if it must be so—my Youth, good-bye !

These notes for slashing leaders I should do,
I'll tether them again in Amy's garter :
Didn't she hunt for it ! I hunted too—
Said a mouse stole it—vowed the wretch no quarter.
It was a trophy, keepsake, what you will—
Ten, twelve . . . O Postumus, the count's awry !—
It serves to keep my papers tidy still . . .
Yes, I am growing old ! my Youth, good-bye !

Here in the drawer naughty Jenny's hair—
How I remember the fond night I shore it !
Close to the head—no miser's measure there—
Ah, we would love for ever ! and we swore it
Upon that lock—she was the sweetest girl !
Such hair ! Like Danaë's shower from the sky
Tumbling, to set my senses in a whirl
(That's trite, but true) . . . O Youth, dear Youth,
good-bye !

I often wish I'd cribbed a lock from each,
As Schaunard in *La Vie* (sigh!) de Bohême :
Sixty he had, each speaking lover's speech,
Each ticketed with memory and name.
But I was always careless—there, of Jack,
Only that hatpin with the butterfly :
Well, it holds Clara's photo in the rack—
She's married now . . . and so, my Youth, good-bye !

And here is Lucy's letter—little jade !
I owe her thrice as many pangs as blisses :
“ I'll never leave you ! ” —ere the ink could fade
She held her mouth up for another's kisses :
“ You are so good, so kind—don't think I flatter !
I'll never love but you ! ” O Lucy, fie !
Not a week after you were . . . bah ! what matter ?
'Twill light my pipe. Good-bye, my Youth, good-bye !

That's all . . . no, something rattles—Kitty's pen !
And, happy thought ! the occasion calls for verses :
She had a tender knack of scribbling when
She chose—perchance her pen her rôle rehearses.
Juventa Mea ! you should be interred
With all due etiquette—we can but try . . .
Six stanzas on your tomb ! 'Twould be absurd
To rise again ? Good-bye, my Youth, good-bye !

THREE CLIFFS.

From that cliff Daley fell :
 The Muses' lover,
He cast his line too well
 And himself over.
Shrieked all the tuneful Nine !
 Fled all the fishes ! . . .
(One basketful divine ;
 Seventeen dishes.)

From this cliff Lawson fell :
 Our Bush reflector,
Losing in hydromel
 His poise of Hector.
Were nerves awry his foes ?
 Did his wrongs rankle ? . . .
(Broken, a noble nose ;
 Item, an ankle.)

Sometimes, in dreaming dull,
 By a cliff ghastly
I see a human hull,
 Shroud and rent mast lie ;
And humbly meditate :
 Here, in this life-hell,
But for the grace of Fate
 I, even I fell.

THE POETELEPATH.

TO H. McC.

There was no portent, no preparation. It came upon me as all the great crises of life come, suddenly. The clear, bland morning was just as usual, or as unusual. The trams growled; the newsboys howled; and the number of foot-passengers with visibly-curved legs started a train of mild speculation that lasted till I reached the office.

The official young lady met me at the stair-foot. She said: "There's a man upstairs. He said he would wait. He said he knows you." That was absolutely the only intimation I had of what was coming. So carelessly do we approach the precipices of existence!

He rose as I entered. The man might know me, I reflected; but I did not know the man. That proved nothing. I said "Yes?" with a rising inflection, and waited. He bowed profoundly. "I am the inventor of the poetelepath," he said. I did not commit myself: I said "Yes?" again, and again waited. He said, "Permit me, Sir——" and turned to a large square package.

"Wait a moment," I interposed; "what is that thing? Am I sure I want to see it?"

"It is the greatest invention of the age," he said; but he said it humbly. No fire flashed from his eye; his voice did not leave the flat tones of daily business; he

was not at all alarming. Such a rosy little dumpling of a man could not be alarming. He was rather like the conventional Cupid in coat and trousers, and two buttons had left the middle of his vest. His features were nothing in particular : " the collection " disengaged an expression like mild butter.

" All right," I said ; " let's see it. What do you call it ? "

" The POETELEPATH," he enunciated very distinctly, with his chubby little fingers fumbling at the knot.

" And what does it do ? "

" It transfers thought, Sir."

" Yes, that's the telepath. What about the poet ? "

" The thought comes poetically, sir."

" Do you arrange that ? "

" Oh no, Sir ; all thought comes in rhythmical waves. My invention merely collects and reproduces the waves in words and writing."

" You are beginning to be interesting," I said. " But what about rhyme ? Or do we always think in blank verse ? "

He stopped unravelling string, and looked up with a first gleam of excitement in his rather watery grey eyes. " Would you believe it, Sir ? " he said almost confidentially, " that was the thing that amazed me. It's all rhyme. We're a race of poets. And all the rhymes different. That's why I called it the poetelepath."

" Haven't I heard," I suggested, " that something besides rhyme is wanted in poetry ? "

" Not in the popular mind, Sir," said Cupid, growing rosier with enthusiasm ; " not in the popular mind."

Whatever rhymes is poetry, in the popular mind. Otherwise they don't recognise it."

He didn't say "reckernise," but gave the word its full value. "You speak distinctly," I said; "that is a pleasure to me."

"It's my invention taught me, Sir," he responded. "If you will believe me, before I invented it, I was as ignorant as anybody. But I was so shocked at the bad shape of some of the thoughts I heard—prominent men, too, Sir—that I never rested till I had got my own right."

"H'm. And what made you bring your invention to me?"

"Well, Sir, I heard that you were interested in poetry; and the poetelepath gives you all poetry. I thought you might help me with some advice about placing it on the market."

"It sounds rather sordid," I commented; "but go ahead."

"Thank you, Sir. Perhaps, while I am getting ready, you would like to look at this example I recorded yesterday."

He handed me this:

A SUNRISE FANTASY.

The Sea was murmuring to the Night
 In ecstasy withdrawn
 A lullaby of hushed delight
 That thrilled with chords of Dawn.

Selene, weary in the West,
 Cried, "Ah Endymion!
 My Latmian lover, canst not rest?
 Why walkest thou alone?"

"Sleep, for my altered bosom beams
All red to the heart's core :
Sleep, till I shine within thy dreams
And kiss thee, as of yore."

But all the world's true-lovers came
From some far paradise
To shield me from the bitter shame
Of faithless lovers' lies.

Dark Sappho, like a damask rose,
Pressed Phaon fondly there :
"For him I leaped the rock of woes,
Wilt thou do less for Her ?"

And she, the lady Laura, stood
To guard me from disgrace :
I looked within her lifted hood
And saw her lily face.

And Lancelot whispered to my ear,
"Your manhood's trial this :
As I was true to Guinevere
Be true to Brunelys !"

Then to the western sky I turned
And "No !" for answer gave :
In desperate flame the goddess burned
And plunged beneath the wave.

Catullus spoke : "A little while,
My brother, till we feast !"
Then took the path that seemed to smile
Into the budding East.

Troop after troop I watched, amazed,
Speed joyously away
To where the pillared clouds upraised
The portal of the Day.

Beneath the ebon lintel shone
In palpitating tides
The primrose light that shines upon
The brows of angel brides.

Old Ocean, from his sapphire throne
Flung rubies to the land ;
And, all incarnadined, alone,
Sudden I saw Her stand.

No pale and timid beauty she ;
But strong, erect, elate
And glorious in majesty
She stood within the gate.

An emerald circlet decked her hair
Black as a nightmare's mane ;
Her mouth was like a crimson lair
For Love to hide his pain.

Around her tawny breasts a wreath
Of red hibiscus glowed ;
Her huntress' limbs, the tunic 'neath,
Like burnished copper showed.

I saw the bosom rise and fall
Above her maiden zone :
She waited bright Apollo's call
To yield her for his own.

I stretched my hand to grasp the prize,
I took my lyre, the Sun,
And smote the radiant harmonies
That wedded us in one.

"Of whom does that remind me?" I asked.

"I have no idea, Sir," said the inventor, busy with his apparatus. He took the brown paper off the package, and disclosed a cardboard box. He lifted the lid from the box, and took out something like a phonograph without the trumpet. This he carried carefully to the table.

Then the inventor's pride peeped out of Cupid. Unconsciously, he held himself erect ; his voice became sonorous. Plainly his speech had been rehearsed.

"The poetelepath," he said, "is my invention for transferring thought in its own terms to a central receiver—which you see here. This receiver contains nothing but a single common substance whose receptivity and sympathy I learnt by accident ; and this was the germ of my invention. The substance in the receiver is really living matter, in the way that yeast is living matter, and I intensify its life by passing through it continually a light current of electricity from a one-cell battery—here. This very delicate vibrator, which you see—here—is tuned to respond to every thought-vibration that reaches the receiver."

"How ?" I asked abruptly.

"If you will pardon me, sir, that is my secret."

"Certainly," I said ; "and in your turn pardon the interruption."

He went on unperturbed ; he was glowing with his subject. "From the vibrator the thought comes to this enlarging diaphragm, attached to which you will perceive this stylus—which traces the vibrations upon this pad. From that I copy them down."

"It all seems very clear," I said. (It didn't.) "Then you proceed on the theory that a brain is analogous to an electrical battery, and that thought proceeds from it in all directions as the waves proceed from a wireless transmitter ?"

"That is it exactly, Sir ; only it is no longer a theory. My invention proves it a fact."

"From what distance can you collect thoughts ?"

"There seems to be no limit of distance, Sir. I have recognised thoughts coming from New Zealand."

"But if all these thoughts come hurtling in at once—they come in waves, I suppose?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And are all the wave lengths different?"

"Some are very similar, Sir; but I have never yet found two thoughts of precisely the same wave-length—and wave-speed."

"Do you get the thoughts of beasts?"

"Sometimes I have believed so, Sir; but my present opinion is that a beast's thought is not emitted quickly enough to affect the instrument. And some human thoughts seem too quick for it: the receiver is tuned to the average. It is something like an ear, Sir: with a particular consistency of composition, I catch only a definite range of vibrations. I am quite aware that there are many vibrations too fast or too slow for its compass."

"Then could you not get these by altering your composition?"

"It is very difficult, Sir. When I make it either too thick or too thin, the vibration is so poor that the thoughts are missed."

"Well," I said, reverting to a previous idea, "all the thoughts of average speed, for an unlimited distance around, are coming into your receiver at once. How do you manage to separate them? Oh, I beg your pardon. Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you, Sir; I prefer to stand. The difficulty you have mentioned, Sir, was my very greatest difficulty. It took me four years and two months to master. The

nights and nights I sat up seeing nothing but a horrid jangle on the diaphragm ! But I overcame it at last."

" How ? "

" Well, I took the instrument to Hobart, Sir. Hobart is a very quiet place, and the people do not think fast. I tried it at three o'clock in the afternoon, and there was only one wave came through. The instrument wrote as plainly as it writes now. I found out who he was—the man who was thinking . he was a visitor from Sydney, with a touch of brain-fever, and he couldn't sleep. I got every word he thought, and that encouraged me."

" But what about your own thoughts ? "

" I had already cut them off. You see, Sir, the principle of my invention is to make the waves in the receiver synchronise exactly with the thought-waves in any particular brain that is acting as transmitter. When I get the receiver tuned to pitch, it is sympathetic only to waves of one speed and one length. Other waves make no definite impression. They enter the receiver, just as strange thoughts enter your brain, subconsciously as it were. The receiver gives the vibrator only conscious impressions."

" And how did you finally disentangle the thoughts ? "

" Very simply, Sir, after all. I listened at Hobart in the afternoons to the man I spoke about. Some days there were two or three visitors thinking. And I managed it with the battery. I found that by keeping the electrical current at a precise strength I could keep the receiver at the precise consistency that vibrated to any one thought-wave. I had to invent my own adjuster—because of course the current from a cell varies as the chemicals decompose. When I had succeeded in

maintaining the current—automatically—at exactly the same strength, the single thought came clearly to the vibrator, as it does now. Would you care to see an example ? ”

“ Very much,” I said.

He fumbled at the machine, and a small wheel began revolving so fast that I could not see the fans. “ That is the adjuster, Sir,” said the inventor. “ Whatever the force of the battery is now, that will be maintained exactly for nearly three minutes. After that time the friction of the adjuster varies imperceptibly, yet enough to alter the current. We will try it now.”

The stylus was moving fast along the pad till it reached the end of a line, then a mechanical device brought it traversing back to write another line. I watched with interest ; the inventor with a noble calm. Three minutes ; and the stylus stopped. “ No use in going on longer,” said the inventor. “ Somebody else is thinking now.”

He extricated the pad, and I looked at it curiously. Up and down, up and down, in curves and jags the fragment of black-lead had moved. “ And can you read that ? ” I asked.

“ Easily,” said the inventor. “ You know we all think in words, and every word makes a definite alteration in the thought-wave. My vibrator decomposes the wave into words again, or into those motions of the stylus that represent words. The signs vary no more than does the pronunciation of different speeches. It was only a matter of time and attention to learn to read them. I soon identified common words, and the rhyme helped too—when I found that every thought

came in rhyme. Very few words puzzle me now——May I sit down and translate, Sir ? ”

I gave him a pen, and in a few minutes he had written this :—

This Bill's abomination !
And I rise in consternation
To express my execration
Of such maladministration.
It's a horrid aberration
Of land nationalisation ;
It's the worst agglomeration
Of the evils of negation
Of the freehold occupation
And the settler's perfection
I could dream in operation.
Oh, my speech is not blustration !
Shall I not voice protestation
When this land-tax agitation
Earns anathematisation ?
Such a base stultification,
Mutilation, degradation
Of our honest legislation
Passes all imagination.
Why, it's sheer despoliation !
Do you want depopulation ?
Do you want expropriation
Of the backbone of a nation ?
That's no way to civilisation !
And, without exaggeration,
I must say this innovation
Will spell ruin and damnation !

“ But who is it ? ” I said. “ It may be anybody within thousands of miles ? ”

The inventor assented rather sadly.

“ The ideas are familiar,” I said, “ and the style—I seem to have heard those thoughts before. But, except at a place like Hobart, you'll never be able to find out

exactly who is thinking. That seems a serious defect in the poctelepath—its work is all anonymous. And look here," I added, "what about repeating thoughts? How can you make sure of getting the same man on the instrument again?"

The inventor stared gloomily at his feet. "I can't, Sir," he said, "and I don't think I'll ever be able to. The chances against the receiver getting in tune twice to the same wave-thought are infinite. Whoever that man is, probably I'll never hear his thought again."

"Well," I said, "if you can't fix authorship, and you can't repeat a lucky hit, what does it matter whether the machine does the rhyming or you do it all yourself. What do we gain by it?"

"Ah, Sir," said the inventor, "do not say that. You gain insight into a thousand—ten thousand minds. You hear the very fibre of their intellect. And then, think of the fascination of that very uncertainty you deplore, Sir! I plumb the mystery of mind. I never know what thought-wave will come next. The records are as various as the stars in the sky. Let me try again."

Again he set his whirring vane in motion: again we watched the stylus moving jerkily on the pad; and presently he had copied out this:

Lay the bottle there beside me: put the glass upon the chair:

You had better fill it up before you go;

For my hand's a bit unsteady, and I wouldn't like to swear—

And if I spilt a drop I should, I know.

Ah! many's the good bottle I have buried to the world

In obedience to an honest drinker's code:

Now I've come to the last bottle that shall ever wet my throttle.

And the dead marines are calling down the road.

Well, I've done my share of labour, and I've had my share of fun,
 And I've kissed my share of women in my time ;
 And it warms me to remember—now that I must cut and run—
 The glorious sins committed in my prime.
 For I followed all my instincts, and they never led me wrong—
 It's refraining makes the thought of Death a load :
 O, the days of love and laughter—and the nights that followed
 after !
 And the dead girls are singing down the road.

I'm nearly clay ; but still . . I 'm happier when wetter . .
 Remember that I honour you, my wife ;
 For a good girl is good, and a good mate is better,
 But a good wife's the best thing in life . .
 I'm thinking of old times, my dear, before I married you—
 To you and them my last drink is owed :
 " Good-bye ! Here's luck ! " I pass ; and now I'll break the
 glass,
 For the dead mates are beckoning down the road.

" That is in a different metre," I said.
 " The metre changes frequently, Sir. It depends on
 the rhythm of the thoughts."

" And you have no idea who this is either ? "

" No, Sir ; I only know by experiment that the person
 must be in Australia or near it."

" And is that exactly how it comes on the machine ? "
 I asked. " Does the thought-wave always begin and
 end as neatly as that, without any tags or left-over
 words."

" Not at all, Sir ; I have merely copied the perfect
 stanzas, taking no account of odd lines."

" Well," I said, " I wish the quality were a little better.
 Do you never get any real poetry ? "

" It has not been very good so far," admitted the
 inventor. " Of course I have only tried in Australia.

The thoughts seem to run on business chiefly, or politics. The sign for whisky occurs in a good many of the poems. This is it." He pointed out something which looked like an S with two more waggles in it.

"It looks rather tottery," I remarked. "Do the thought-waves ever come in a kind of agitated shape, as if they had to lean on the rhyme to steady them?"

"I see what you mean, Sir; and I am bound to say it does occur sometimes. But it would astonish you to see how differently the waves conduct themselves."

"Well, try again," I said.

Again the wheel spun; the stylus wrote; and presently the inventor had translated this:

Woe! Woe! Woe! For the love of Joe, go slow!
Pause! Pause! Pause! Though a vain applause laws cause!
Mourn! Mourn! Mourn! Nor the Fusion lorn, torn, scorn!
For the evil days draw nigher, said the late great Jeremiah:
Woe! Double-you-oh! Woe! Now, mind I told you so!
I cry, to the sky, and I prophesy
Woe!

"That man's thoughts go to the tune of the Dead March, anyway," I commented. "I wonder who he is."

"Some member of Parliament, I should say, Sir," the inventor suggested.

"That's clear enough," I said. "Try another, will you?"

We tried another, and the inventor smiled. "Something good this time, Sir," he said; "it looks as if we had caught a real poet at work. I didn't know there was one."

He handed me this:

O winds that woo the hills
 Where Wellington abides
 Through all my being thrills
 Your tender airy tides
 (The thought is not amiss :
 I fear the grammar is.)

Come to me at the dawn
 Fresh from the azure dome
 Where clouds, like veils withdrawn,
 Dispart before the throne
 (No ; that will never do.
 The rhyme is rotten too.)

Come to me at the noon,
 And blow me far away
 Till like a child that soon
 May lay him down and play
 I——(What should I do next ?
 Let's see : what was my text ?)

Come to me at the eve
 When umber shadows roll
 Adown the paths that weave
 The chancels of the soul
 (It sounds all right, at least.
 O Muse, you are a beast.)

Far from the Southern pole
 Sweep furiously, and then
 With blissful footsteps stroll
 Around the haunts of men
 (What ? Tea ? Farewell, Romance !
 A poet has no chance.)

“ I wonder who it can be ? ” I said, absorbed. “ He seems to have a hard row to hoe, poor chap ! ”

“ I have not the least idea, Sir,” said the inventor, answering my query.

"Well, try again," I suggested. "Perhaps our luck is in. You never know your luck."

"Very true, Sir," assented the inventor, as he set his machine going. The stylus took no time in dashing off a series of marks which were presently translated thus :

THE TOTE.

The murdered Welsher who lies there
Upon the outraged sod,
With awful Eyes that bleed and stare
To an attentive God :

He is the Gambler's archetype,
The Crowd's inconscient sign,
The Brute's persisting tiger-stripe ;
And yet, he is not mine.

Of making Books the end they shun
Who dread the Furies' lash ;
My sin is ended when begun ;
I save my soul in Cash.

'Tis You who lay, 'tis You who call,
You fix the Starting Price ;
I only hold the stake for all,
On Virtue build my Vice.

Sometimes, in hours of mortal Stress
(Called, by Police, a raid)
Awhile I leave my patrons guess
If Wagers will be paid.

But soon the Law, with gloomy face,
Collects her traps and goes ;
Again the instinct of the Race
Old Order overthrows :

With genial Life I thrill the land,
 Refill the honest pot,
 Revitalise spent Doubles, and—
 Deduct my little lot.

Though Life in racing bubbles soar
 To froth the eternal Mug,
 Like Death, I negligently pour
 The mug into the Jug.

I triumph in a new St. Paul's
 For heaven-desirous serf,
 Or win, behind my armoured walls,
 St. Vincents of the turf.

Where Randwick's artful snare is set,
 Or Yarra's act is rash,
 Of Sport I am the Alpha bet,
 And Omega, the splash.

The sturdy Roman knew me well,
 The gay Athenian crowd,
 And Celtic bards, with words that smell
 And thoughts that burn endowed.

But whether in the shop or school,
 Or where machines are sent,
 I preach the Automatic Rule
 Of taking Ten per Cent. :

*That Chance bestows what all may share,
 That Figures cannot lie,
 That Natural Odds are always fair,
 Are low, however high.*

"H'm," I said, "I seem to know that chap. But to come to the point, what do you wish me to do?"

"Well, Sir, I should like you, if you would be so good, to say that I intend giving a public exhibition in the

Domain at three o'clock next Wednesday afternoon. In the meantime, if you would give me your assistance as a writer in drafting a prospectus, based on what you have seen, I think there would be no difficulty in raising capital to turn the invention to profitable account. I regret to say that I have come to the end of my slender resources."

"I'll do it with pleasure," I said, "and I feel it an honour to be brought into association with such a marvellous contrivance. Why, you are the greatest man of the age!"

"Thank you, Sir," said the inventor, modestly; "I am proud to hear you say so. Then I shall wait upon you again next week. Would you like to see another thought-message before I leave?"

"Yes, indeed," I said; and the inventor set the instrument going as before. We watched it for a minute. Suddenly, without a moment's warning, the receiver leaped high in the air, scattering its contents all over the room. A fragment of composition fell upon my nose: it smelt very like soap. The inventor uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Nothing like that has ever happened before, Sir," he assured me. "Fortunately no damage is done. I shall only have to make some fresh composition. But I wonder what——"

The stylus had stopped half-way down the pad. He took up the pen and commenced translating while I followed the words over his shoulder. They were simply ghastly. I had never dreamed that such awful thoughts existed. The purport was only too clear. The receiver had fallen in tune with the brain of another

member of Parliament. Apparently, to judge by one expression, he was a Labour man. He was thinking—if such boiling lava could be called thoughts—he was thinking of some proposal to abolish payment of members. Of course I cannot repeat his thoughts. I shudder to remember them. They have seared my mind ineffaceably.

The wild inventor glared with furious eyes. “Horrible!” he exclaimed. It took me five minutes to calm him. It took him another five minutes to gather up the ruins of his apparatus and go. I have not seen him since.

But that is the story of him.

ANTÆAN

I have known men, and been friends with some,
And some there have been strong friends to me ;
But at times and seasons one tires of all—
Grieving to tire—for the new dreams call,
And new thoughts part us more than a sea :
When you turn for solace, their lips are dumb.

And I have known women, and loved a few,
And a few have been fond and have loved me well ;
But there always was something unexpressed
That none of them knew, or glimpsed, or guessed :
There is always something you cannot tell
However closely they strain to you.

So when weary of errors and misconceptions
I go where the Bush fronts grand to the sky ;
And my small, weak life is merged in the Whole,
And the soul of me's lost in the general Soul,
And bland airs blow from this hot, tired I
All its worries, and griefs, and pigmy deceptions.

And I lie at rest in the sparse short grasses,
With Space poured round me and Time annulled,
And watch through the flickering trees' embrasures
Dim greys glide into infinite azures :
In Silence's lap I'm cradled and lulled,
And vagrom Sound croons peace as she passes.

And the Bush bends closer and holds my hands ;
And her noons or her nights yearn low to listen
When I tell her all in her inmost shrine,
And receive absolution for follies o' mine ;
Her mouth may smile, but her grave eyes glisten —
She is my Lover, and understands.





UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

DC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 560 397 2

